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THINGS

SET IN A PROPER LIGHT;

IN ANSWER TO A LETTER

FROM T. A. TO A FRIEND,

BY AN

ORTHODOX CLERGYMAN OF MASSACHUSETTS.

I withstood him—because he was to be blamed.....*Paul.*

"If men were not to speak their minds in spite of human creeds and establishments, *truth* would soon be banished from the earth."

"What can be more absurd than the supposition that we must divest ourselves of the *social virtues*, and put off *humanity* in order to become *religious*. And yet how often does it happen, that we commence creatures of *prey*, by biting and devouring one another, in order to exert our religious *zeal*, and to show that we are *religious* men."

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REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

In compliance with your request I gave you my thoughts, sometime past, on the subject of human creeds or articles of faith, *as religious tests*, connected with an humble attempt to ascertain the true character of Jesus Christ. These thoughts I considered as "reasonable and candid;" and it was with no small satisfaction I soon had the assurance that you, Sir, and no inconsiderable number of the friends of pure and undefiled religion considered them as justly entitled to *that character*. But whatever may be their claim to reasonableness and candor, they have been instrumental of exciting very considerable attention to the subjects about which they are conversant; and, I have much reason to believe, to good effect. Never have I known the attention of people of my connexion and in the vicinity, so much excited in relation to the interesting and important question, "what saith the scripture," as it has been since the publication of the *seasonable and candid thoughts*. To ascertain what is truth respecting the person and character of the son of God, the scriptures have been read by many with much assiduity and deep interest, and so far as this attention has extended, the result has, in many instances been a conviction, that Jesus Christ is a person or being *distinct* from him, who is his Father; and that he is inferior to, and dependent on his Father. Besides, I have much reason to believe, that so far as the subject has been duly attended to in this region, a general and satisfactory conviction prevails, that the inspired scriptures are abundantly competent, as a rule of faith and practice, *without* the aid of human creeds. The prevalence of truth in this world of sin and error, although slow, is nevertheless sure, and will ultimately prevail.

That the sentiments contained in the "seasonable and candid thoughts," whether correct or otherwise, would meet with opposition in some form, was to be expected. This expectation is now realized in the publication of a pamphlet, entitled "Seasonable Thoughts on Human Creeds, or Articles of Faith, by an orthodox clergyman, shewn to be very unreasonable thoughts, in a letter to a friend." To this letter is affixed the signature, T. A. As the author saw fit to conceal his name, he will not consider any remarks made by the writer of this;

which may have an unfavorable bearing on any sentiments contained in his letter, as savoring of any personal prejudice or disrespect.

Averse to controversial discussions, as they are but too frequently conducted, I should not have taken up the pen of controversy on this occasion, but from the hope that it may be happily instrumental of removing some misapprehensions of Mr. A. and of others, respecting sentiments which I lately published, and of placing the subject of controversy between us in a proper light. These are the principal objects of the following pages. That they may be duly realized, and that their result may be an increase of correct knowledge, of *christian* moderation and candor, of *desirable* peace and unity among all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, is my heart's desire and prayer to God.

While it will be my object to defend what I conceive to be the cause of christian truth and freedom with that intrepidity and firmness which becomes one, "who is set for the defence of the gospel," it will be no less my object to do this, with becoming "meekness and fear."

It is to me, Sir, a subject of no little surprise and of no less regret, that the author of the letter under review has declined to "undertake to ascertain the personal dignity of our Lord Jesus Christ," as this subject, in my seasonable thoughts, has the most important bearing on the subject of human creeds, considered as religious tests. But notwithstanding this very material omission, he has "no doubt but the principalities and powers in heavenly places adore him as the Jehovah of Hosts, the self-existent God, agreeably to what Isaiah says, when he saw his glory and spake of him."* p. 3.

Whether these passages furnish such plenary evidence that Jesus Christ is adored as the self-existent God by principalities and powers in heavenly places, as reasonably to exclude *all doubt* of the fact, may, to say the least, be reasonably doubted. In verse 1, of the chapter referred to, the prophet "saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, &c." verse 2, "Above it stood the seraphims, &c." verse 3, "And one cried unto another, and said, holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." Verses 9, 10. "And he said, go, tell this people hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed. *Compared* with John, 12, 39, 40, 41. Therefore they could not believe, because that *Esaias* said

*Isaiah, 6. 3. John, 12. 41.

again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said *Esaias*, when he saw his glory, and spake of him."

The Lord seated on a throne, and who is stiled *the Lord of hosts*, Mr. A supposes is, *without doubt*, " our Lord Jesus Christ." But that the evangelical prophet or the apostle *John* supposed this, is, I am persuaded, to say the least, very doubtful. In support of this opinion I have to observe—that the self-existent God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is repeatedly represented in scripture in the character of king seated on a majestic throne, as in the following examples. " I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him. And behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat upon the throne. And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book. And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne a Lamb, and he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne."—And thus the Supreme God and Father is, in vision represented to *Isaiah*, in which the prophet heard the voice of Him who was enthroned saying " whom shall I send ! To which *Isaiah* answered " here I am, send me."—Ver. 8.

It then follows in ver. 9, 10, " Go, tell this people, &c." In this visionary message the prophet was assured, that *this people* would remain impenitent and unrestrained. And the apostle *John* shews that the obstinacy and blindness of the Jews, in rejecting Christ and the messages of salvation which he brought, were an illustration and fulfilment of *Isaiah's* prophecy. *These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him*, viz. the things stated in John 12, 38, 40 verses. That this passage refers, not to Christ but to God the Father; you will find much, if not satisfactory evidence, by comparing it with verse 38. " *Lord*, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed." *These things said Esaias when he saw him*, &c. viz. *Him*, to whom the prophet complained, when he said, *Lord, who hath believed our report*, &c. And that this *Him* was God the Father you will find further evidence by examining Isaiah 53. 1, from which the words, *who hath believed our report*, are quoted. " And to whom is the *arm* (Christ) of the Lord (viz. the Father) *revealed*," ver. 2, " For he (Christ) shall grow up before him (the Father) as a tender plant, &c. ver. 4, " Yet we did esteem him (Christ) stricken, smitten of God (the Father) and afflicted." Ver. 6, " And the Lord (the Father) hath laid on him (Christ) the iniquity of us all." In the view of these things I cannot but think you will find much, if not irresistible evidence, that *Isaiah* spoke, *not of our Lord Jesus* Christ; *but of the God and Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This explication of the passages in *Isaiah* and *John* may be defective. I cannot however but think it is agreeable to truth, and I would hope it will be satisfactory to your mind. But however this may be, you cannot consider the passages, I am persuaded, as furnishing that evidence that Jesus Christ is the object of adoration to " the principalities and powers in heavenly places," as the *self-existent God*, which ought to exclude *all doubt.*

When it is considered that " Christ Jesus humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ;" and that in consequence of this, " God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, *to the glory of God the Father.*"—When this is duly considered, I cannot but think *some evidence* will be exhibited that Jesus Christ is a person or being *distinct* from the Father, the self-existent God ; that he was *dependent* upon this God, and was *by him exalted* to supereminent dignity and glory ; and that the adoration or worship to be paid him, by beings in heaven, as well as in earth, is *primarily and chiefly due to the Father*, and must *ultimately terminate in the glory of the Father* " who *made* him both Lord and Christ." When it is further considered that the heavenly inhabitants are represented in the Apocalypse, as " crying with a loud voice, saying, salvation to our *God* which sitteth upon the throne, *and* unto the *Lamb*," even that Lamb who was *slain*, additional evidence seems to arise, that the adoration paid to Jesus Christ by the heavenly inhabitants, is not paid to him as the self-existent God, who is *absolutely immortal and immutable.* Did this God ever *die !* was he ever *slain !* How then can it be evident " beyond a doubt" that the adoration paid to the *Lamb*, *who was slain*, is *precisely* the same adoration which is paid to *Him who sitteth upon the throne ;* or that this Lamb is the same being, the same object of adoration with Him who is enthroned ! All the angels of God are indeed required to worship Jesus Christ; but they are required to worship him, as the *begotten* of the Father, whom he *brought into the world.* Does not this circumstance seem to furnish accumulated evidence, that the angelic worship which is paid to Christ, is *distinct* from that worship, which angelic beings pay to God the Father ; and that the Father who *begat*, is a being perfectly distinct from him, who was *begotten !*

It were easy to enlarge upon this subject, and to produce such evidence from the Bible in opposition to the undoubting belief of Mr. A. as would, I am persuaded, render that belief

in your estimation, to say the truth, very doubfully founded; but as he has declined a particular discussion of the subject, I shall for the present, wave a further consideration of it; and proceed to the examination of his letter, agreeably to the order, in which he has arranged its contents.

SECTION I.

In the last paragraph of his letter, p. 4, the author says, "If we understand him (the orthodox clergyman) the real point which he aims to establish is this, that the doctrines of truth ought never to be put on paper, in other language than that of scripture, and a person be required to subscribe or assent to them as a test of his orthodoxy in order to his admission to christian fellowship."

If the author of this paragraph understood me as opposing the doctrines of *truth*, as tests of orthodoxy, when put on paper, in other than scriptural language, he must certainly have misunderstood my design, at least, in part.

But the *error* with which I consider human creeds and articles of faith as chargeable, in many instances at least, is not, I readily acknowledge, my *only* ground of objection to them. I object to them generally as *needless*, as *tending* to evil, and as being the *occasion* of evil; and of evil which *but for them*, might be happily avoided. My sentiments with respect to this objection, I hope to state with sufficient perspicuity, and reasonably to defend them in the course of this letter.

"God is love." This sentence, observes the reviewer of my seasonable thoughts, p. 4, is expressed wholly in scriptural language, and he presumes that the "O. C." would not esteem any one a christian, who would not assent to the truth of this declaration. He also observes in p. 5, that if this same great truth should be proposed to any one on paper, in these words, "God is a being of infinite benevolence," he ought not (according to my sentiments of human creeds) by any means to be required, to assent to it; that it would "be unlawful, useless, an usurpation, and pernicious to insist upon his assenting to it in this dress."

Although I should not be very likely to say that it would be "pernicious" to require the assent of any one to this proposition, *God is a being of perfect benevolence* in order "to his admission to christian fellowship;" yet I do not hesitate to say, that to *require* this of any christian, or "any one," as an *indispensable condition* of his admittance to the enjoyment of the special institutions, or ordinances of the gospel, would be useless, unlawful, and a usurpation. It would be *useless;* because an assent to the Bible proposition, *God is love*, would, to say the least, be *quite as good a text* of orthodoxy, as the other, "God is a being of perfect benevolence." Nor am I willing

to think so unfavorably of any christian, and especially of any one, who is " set for the defence of the gospel," as to believe that he will *directly* oppose, or even question the truth and correctness of this sentiment. It is *unlawful.* What can be more so than to require a fellow christian to say that " God is a being of perfect benevolence," in order to his admission to christian fellowship, when he readily assents to the Bible test, " God is love." If to debar him from partaking of " children's bread," after subscribing or assenting to this test, because he will not subscribe or assent to another of human device be not unlawful, and in a very high degree, I know not what can be considered as unlawful. It is *usurpation.* How can it be otherwise than a forcible and unjust invasion or seizure of the rights of conscience and of christian liberty, to require of a christian brother, who assents to a scriptural creed or proposition, to give his assent to a creed or proposition of men's device, as a condition of his enjoying a great and precious christian privilege !

These are just and weighty objections, as they lie in my mind, to human creeds or articles of faith, as religious tests. And I am constrained, from a conviction of duty,—from a sense of that reverence which I owe to the inspired scriptures, to the rights of conscience, and to religious freedom, to bear open and decided testimony against them.

" Whence but to this source is to be traced a large portion of those unhallowed contentions, angry disputes, acrimonious censures, and the unchristian, cruel and relentless persecutions which have tarnished and disfigured the amiable and lovely visage of our holy and beneficient religion. Have they not been in many instances both the father and the child of hard-favored bigotry, severe superstition, and frantic enthusiasm ? Have they not in a high degree been the occasion of tearing into many parts the mystical body of Christ, and of setting at irreconcilable variance those who would otherwise have dwelt together in unity and love as christian brethren ? Have they not been greatly conducive to the aggrandizement of the ministers of religion, by effectually preparing the way to their acquisition of prodigious wealth, enormous authority, and the most gigantic and injurious power ?"

This is the quotation from the " seasonable thoughts," as made by Mr. A. ; and it may be, in his own estimation, fairly and correctly made ; but I am sorry to find it otherwise. Had it been mutilated only to the injury of its grammatical construction, or to an unimportant alteration of its sense and *bearing*, I should make no complaint. But as I consider it *so* quoted, as grossly to pervert, if not wholly to subvert its legitimate meaning and just application, I cannot but complain of the injury.

That I have reasonable ground for this complaint, and that the reader may not be imposed upon, I must request him to turn back to p. 5, of the gentleman's letter, where he will find the following passage—" Never before had I an idea, that the truth disrobed of scripture language and put into the common dialect, became rank poison, and the cause of immense mischief to the human race. Have mere words, letters or syllables such a terrific magic power, to transform the best thing in the universe into the very worst ? All this we must believe, if we accredit what this writer (the orthodox clergyman) says."

The gentleman could not have but noticed, that in intimate connexion with the quoted passage, I distinctly stated, " Such, in a great measure, at least, *have been* the evils which have resulted from articles of faith devised and fabricated by human wisdom as tests of orthodoxy and christian fellowship," and "many evils result from them in *our day*." Ought he not then, to have done justice to the quotation, have referred the evils which it enumerates to *past times*, to the conduct of the Romish church and other corrupt churches ? Although the question did not *explicitly* refer to those ages and churches, yet no man, I should suppose, acquainted with the history of the church would be likely to consider it otherwise than as having this reference ; and especially as I distinctly oppose the evils mentioned in the quotation, to the evils which result from human creeds in *our day*.

If the gentlemen then, may be considered as speaking pertinently to his subject, I see not but the "*truth*" and the "*best thing in the universe*," of which he speaks, are in his opinion to be found in the creeds of the Romish church, and of other corrupt churches as they existed in past ages.

That human creeds and articles of faith, established and imposed as religious tests have, in *times past*, been the occasion of a great portion of the evils as stated in the quotation from my seasonable thoughts, cannot reasonably be questioned ; and that they contained sentiments, so far from constituting the *best thing* in the universe, as to constitute *almost the worst*, is a truth also not to be questioned. And these are the things to which I principally refer in the passage quoted by Mr. A.— Yet this gentleman peremptorily asserts that " if we credit what this writer (the orthodox clergyman) says," we must believe that *truth* disrobed of scripture language, and put into the common dialect becomes rank poison, and the cause of immense mischief to the human race ; and that letters and syllables have the magic power, to transform the best thing in the universe into the worst ! If by this, the gentleman did not intend to convey the idea, that the religious creeds, formularies, &c. of the Romish church and of other corrupt churches, con-

tain *the truth*, and the *best thing* in the universe, it is difficult to determine what his intention could have been !

It is possible, however, that I may have misapprehended his meaning. If what he says, will bear a more favorable construction than I have given it, I will readily allow that construction. But what can this more favorable construction be ? I know of none which can be admitted more favorable than this, thut *some* human creeds, contain the truth and are " the *best things* in the universe ! This, for aught I can see, is the most favorable construction which can with any propriety, be given to the remarks, which the gentleman has advanced. But it will require no " figures of rhetoric, or powers of logic or of eloquence," to convince the reader that my opponent places these same creeds, not merely on a footing of equality with the Holy Scriptures, but that he decidedly gives them the *precedence*, by placing them on *higher ground !* If these creeds constitute the *best thing* in the universe, surely the Bible must be thrown into the *back ground ;* for this book, however great may be its excellence, cannot be so *good a thing* as another which is *better*, and even the very *best thing* in the universe.

Should this construction of the gentleman's words appear to you, sir, and to others as uncandid and injurious, I shall neither be surprised nor disappointed ; for it seems almost incredible that any man professing himself a christian, should hold a creed of human device, as a test of orthodoxy and communion, in higher estimation than the Bible. Nor could I easily believe this of any christian or body of christians, although their words should seem evidently to imply it, were it not for their *actions*, which speak a language much less ambiguous than their words. But when they *practically* say, that an assent to the Bible,and the most unblameable and pious life do not furnish sufficient evidence of a man's orthodoxy and his meetness for admission to their christian fellowship and communion—when they further practically say that they do not wish to test the orthodoxy of a man's head, or the goodness of his heart, either by the Bible or by a christian course of living ; but that in these respects he must be tested by a human creed, and that this same human creed must be his passport into the church; when I consider these things, I am constrained, though very reluctantly, to believe, that I have done Mr. A. no injustice in the above remarks.

If I have advanced any thing in the foregoing pages, which may be thought to carry the appearance, that my opposition to human creeds, has been restricted to those of the church of Rome, and other notoriously corrupt churches, I beg leave in this connection to *remove the mistake*. To the creeds established by those churches, I have attributed the principal evils

which I have enumerated. But far am I from believing that human creeds established as tests of orthodoxy, at the present day, and by the purest churches, can be vindicated from the charge of evil, and much greater evil than any good, which may be supposed to result from them. Agreeably I have observed in my seasonable thoughts, p. 13, " that many evils result from them in *our day*." And that is really the case, a cursory examination of the subject of creeds must be sufficient satisfactorily to evince. In this examination however, I do not mean to confine myself to *our day*, *literally and exclusively*, but to modern times.

Since the reformation from popery, the church of England, and most of the churches dissenting from it, you will admit, I presume, to be among the purest churches in christendom.— These churches, the most of them at least, have had their creeds or articles of faith as religious tests, and still support them.— But what, my dear sir, have been the advantages resulting from them ? If any, have not by far the greater portion of them been such, as result from an *evil source ?* If so, these tests must be advocated, in a great measure at least, on the principle of doing *evil* that *good might come*. But this is a principle, it is hoped, for which Mr. A. and others in sentiment with him, will not plead.

Let us then take a cursory view of the thirty-nine articles of the church of England, which constitute its religious creed or test, the circumstances connected with them, and consequences resulting from them.

To graduate the orthodoxy of that creed and the propriety of the religious ceremonies, &c. connected with it, I shall not attempt. I will only say in this place, that their errors are such, in my estimation, and I presume in the estimation of Mr. A. and protestant dissenters generally, as to render it unjustifiable to subscribe or assent to them. That gentleman, I am willing to believe, would not subscribe or assent to the articles of that creed to obtain a *bishoprick*, or even the *archiepiscopal see of Canterbury*. Yet those articles were supposed by the *compilers* to be *very orthodox*. And if the *imposers* of them, do not view them in the same light, their honesty and uprightness must appear rather questionable. Now if these articles be orthodox, why should any other creed or articles have been formed, as tests of orthodoxy ? Why should not all protestant dissenters, subscribe, or assent to them ! To deny the usefulness, the importance, and necessity of such subscription or assent, would appear with an ill grace in the advocates of human creeds. Why is not the episcopalian creed, as good a one as the creed of a dissenting church ? It was constructed by wise, and learned, and pious men, who verily believed it to

be excellent and unexceptionable. But let us more particularly examine it.

This creed, notwithstanding it consists of fewer articles than some others, employed for years, the learned labors of the most learned men to explain its meaning and design. How many folios have been written and printed upon the subject, I shall not undertake to decide ; nor shall I undertake to determine how much precious time has been wasted, by rational beings, in reading and commenting upon those ponderous lucubrations. But this I do not hesitate to say, that both the writers and readers would, in my opinion, have spent their time *to much better purpose*, had it been employed in *some other pursuit*. But what has been the result of these learned and arduous labors ? An *elucidation* of the articles, or a *unanimity* of sentiment respecting them ? This can hardly be pretended. In this great work, doctor has risen up against doctor, and bishop against bishop, till in intricate mazes they have lost themselves and confounded their readers. Each writer, however, has appeared a champion for the national creed, as the bulwark of the national religion. And those to whom this religion has been principally intrusted, have but too often agreed, to require subscription to it, under the most severe *pains and penalties*. The consequence has been that multitudes of the most learned, pious and successful preachers of the gospel, who could not conscientiously subscribe the creed imposed upon them by *their superiors*, have suffered the most rigorous and unchristian treatment. Because they embraced the Bible, as the standard of their faith and preaching, instead of a human creed and establishment, they were forcibly silenced as preachers, deprived of their livings, imprisoned, and in a variety of other ways injuriously—cruelly treated !

How many and great also have been the sufferings of the puritans as well as their public teachers in consequence of the religious test, or tests of the church of England ! For their neglect to conform to them, because their consciences would not suffer them to do it, or because they thought it right to obey *God* rather than *man*, the redoubtable Defender of the Faith, *James* the first, threatened that he would " *hurry them out of the land, and even worse.*" His sacred majesty was not forgetful of his threatening. He very rigidly carried it into effect. Accordingly many conscientious christians, found it necessary either to violate the dictates of conscience, or flee from the impending tempest by leaving their native land and pleasant habitations, to seek an asylum in a strange country. Without hesitation the latter course was adopted.

Such were the views of these masters in Israel, and a numerous tribe of their subordinates, that with unblushing front

they could say—" We the representatives of a *formed* established church, do not think fit to mention the word *Religion*, any further than it is the religion of some *formed established church!*" However different might have been their language at certain times and on certain occasions, yet it cannot be disguised that their conduct but too well accorded with this their extraordinary avowal. Such was their zeal for the thirty-nine articles, and so rigidly did they enforce subscription to them, that spirited opposition was soon excited against their oppressive and tyrannical measures. This produced no little alarm for the honor and safety of the *sacred ark*, in those to whose custody it was committed. Hence the fury of their zeal and the violence of their measures in some degree subsided. Ways and means were devised and adopted to render the national establishment less offensive to scrupulous minds. The thirty-nine articles, to which subscription had been required according to *their literal and most obvious meaning*, were now considered by many of their advocates as capable of *very different senses*. And it was urged that they might " honestly be subscribed in *either sense*." These advocates for the creed, admit, " that no two thinking men ever agreed exactly in opinion, even with regard to *any one article of it*—that the articles are capable of the several senses of *different doctors*, and that an article being conceived in such general words, that it admit of different literal and grammatical senses, even when the senses are plainly *contrary to each other*, both sides may subscribe the articles with a *good conscience, and without equivocation!*" And these different senses have, by the ingenuity of its advocates and subscribers, increased to the goodly number of *fourteen!* between which senses the agreement and amalgamation is much the same with that, which existed between the iron and the clay in the visionary image of an antient king of Babylon. I would rather say, that the agreement between the different senses in which those articles are conceived and subscribed, is not very dissimilar to that which exists between light and darkness, sweet and bitter, good and evil. And yet these same articles may be subscribed in these different senses with " a good conscienc and without any equivocation!" This I confess appears not a little strange, and somewhat difficult to reconcile. But when it is considered that very learned, able and *casuistical doctors* can get over all the difficulties, which seem to attend the subject, with so much ease and satisfaction to themselves, why should *we* dissent from, or question the correctness of their sapient and very accommodating decision!

Yet when we look upon the other side of the question, and find other doctors, equally learned, able and casuistical, dealing out their censures against this latitudinarian and accommo-

dating policy, it is very possible that we may have a less favorable opinion of the subject. Let us then take the other side view of it.

" The title of the articles," (the thirty-nine articles of the church of England,) it is observed on the other side, " bears that they were agreed upon in convocation, *for the avoiding of diversities of opinions, and the stablishing consent touching true religion.*"

These articles to which snbscription is required, " are either a rule teaching in the church, or they are not a rule. If they are not a rule, what *constitutes the church of England ?* If they be a rule and a standard, where must be grounded the authority of modern teaching, which is not only *not agreeable to these articles*, but *absolutely a contrary system ?* In case, by any after-lights, a clergyman finds cause to change his subscribing opinion, and goes into different schemes, why is not such disagreement with *this rule* publickly acknowledged, and the people advertised of the difference ? This mystery of the pulpit appears unfair with respect to the people. They have no fixed sight of their ministers scheme. They can have no *security*, no *dependence* upon him, in *any* doctrinal point whatsoever."

" Not the sermons and private writings even of our reformers themselves are to be taken for authentic tests of our established doctrines as a church, but those *stubborn things*, called *articles* and *homilies*, which have received the sanction of *law*, and the stamp of *public authority*. These *stubborn things* (for such they are) still remain, *blessed be God*, to stare some certain folks in the face, and to demonstrate the glaring apostacy of such as *say they are Jews, and are not, but are found liars.*— To these stubborn things we are to *appeal ;* by them, every subscriber is *bound*, and from these our *doctrines must be learnt.* These confessions are designed to be tests by which the governors of the church *may find out*, whether they who desire to be appointed pastors and teachers, *assent* to the faith and doctrines contained in them or not." If they *do not*, " they *frustrate* the purpose for which they were established."

Thus we find the great masters in Israel not only *differing* in opinion, but in almost or quite *direct opposition* to each other, with respect to subscription or assent to their thirty-nine articles.—Some we find pleading that they may be honestly subscribed in *any* or *almost any conceivable sense.* On the other side we find champions for subscription, urging that the articles are to be subscribed according to their *literal, grammatical* and *obvious sense*, and that they cannot otherwise be subscribed, consistently with their *true design* and with *integrity of heart.* Now I desire to know on which side of the question, if on either, reason or scripture, or truth, is to be found. If

articles of faith imposed as religious tests, may be subscribed and assented to in *different* senses, in *opposite* senses—in *all* senses—one would think that *Common Sense* would withhold subscription.

Who that attentively considers this latitudinarian mode of subscribing to a religious creed, but must be convinced, not only that it is useless—worse than useless ; but that it is a *solemn farce*, and a *shameful trifling with what is deemed most sacred !* Must not this conduct, to say nothing of its advocates, be considered as " weak and contemptible beyond any thing of the kind that ever come from the Jesuits !"*

But if these articles are imposed with the design to promote and secure *uniformity of sentiment* ; and if subscription to them is to be considered as required in *one and the same sense*, who, that has any reflection, but must be convinced, both of the *impracticability* and *unreasonableness* of the device !

By attempting to effect uniformity of sentiment in this way, *hypocrisy* may be encouraged and promoted, or a sort of *blind assent* to a sort of *blind formulary*, may be secured ; but a rational ~~and~~ and intelligible coalescence in opinion, among men, will *never* be achieved by it. All attempts to this purpose have *heretofore*, in a great measure at least, failed ; nor is it to be expected that any desirable success will *ever* attend or result from them.

Whatever stress may be laid on subscription to the creed of the church of England, or any other human creed ; whatever parade of sanctity may accompany the subscription, or however conducive a belief of its articles may be thought to holiness of heart or life, it is all grimace and hypocrisy, if a real principle of pure and undefiled religion do not influence the hearts of the subscribers. But how this principle should either be *originated* or *cherished* by subscription or assent to a human creed, rather than to the scriptures, I cannot myself conceive, nor, it is believed, is any one able to tell. From what I have seen and learnt of human creeds, I do not hesitate to say, that points of christian doctrine, so far from being rendered more

*It is not my design that the remarks which I have made in relation to the church of England, should be applied to it, or its religious rulers and teachers, at the *present time*, without considerable qualifying. The intolerant spirit which formerly constituted a very prominent feature of their general character, has given place, in no small degree, to a spirit of mildness and genuine catholicism. This church is now adorned with many bright and shining lights; nor was it destitute, in past times, of such luminaries. And that we are justly indebted to them for many sources of the most important information and means of improvement, is readily and gratefully acknowledged. But their religious creeds and establishments and the manner in which they impose and support them, admit, it is believed, neither of justification nor apology.

plain and intelligible by them, are, by *their* light, not a little obscured. *The brilliancy of the diamond is not increased by the daubings of the painters pencil.* The application of this remark cannot be doubtful.

"But what have we to do," it may be asked, "with the 39 articles of the church of England? Are we *Episcopalians?* Or do we advocate their creed? Are Protestant dissenters disposed to subscribe it? That creed we reject as erroneous and heretical." But why, my dear Sir, is this creed to be thus treated by us? It is considered by many as very correct and orthodox; and that it is not as really and fully so, as many other religious creeds of more modern date, *is more than I can pretend to say.* But if we have nothing to do with this creed as its advocates, we may derive from it very important and useful instruction. It should instruct us that the same reason or principle, by virtue of which we reject this religious test, should operate to the exclusion and extinguishment of *all human creeds, imposed as religious tests.* It is to no effect to plead that some creeds of human device are better than others, or that any one is "the best thing in the universe;" it is to no effect to urge that christian churches, or that any christian church or association, has a right, and ought to establish a creed of their own fabrication, with the view to promote their peace and religious prosperity, or with the view to preserve and cherish orthodox sentiments; and equally without effect is the plea that *their* creed contains *nothing antiscriptural.* The plea, with whatever zeal and confidence it may be made, or with whatever apparent or real concern for the cause of religion, is, to say the least, nugatory and vain; for the very principle on which this plea is founded, if it were correct and admissible, would justify all the religious dogmas, superstitions, and anathemas of the church of Rome. What good reason, then, can be assigned why *this church* has not the same right to establish a religious test, for its peace and prosperity, and for the promotion of orthodox sentiments, as any *other church* or *association of men?*

The Protestants, indeed, who shook off the Papal creed or yoke complained that it was too unreasonable, oppressive, and heavy to be borne. Nor is this to be wondered at. They urged that they could not, with a good conscience, submit to it. And do we not believe that their conduct was as rational, as magnanimous? And that their apology for, and vindication of it, were as forcible as just? How then could the leaders of these same Protestants, and particularly in England, have consistently imposed a creed or yoke upon their brethren, similar in principle to that, which they had just shaken off! Is it to be wondered at, that so many should have complained of this,

as an imposition, to which neither christian liberty, nor the dictates of conscience would suffer them to submit? But what was the conduct of these same *remonstrants and dissenters?* One would think that they would not have appreaed as the advocates for that very conduct of which they had so feelingly complained; against which they had so justly remonstrated, and which they had so intrepidly condemned. But strange and unaccountable as it may appear, they adopted and pursued, at least many of them, the very measures in principle which had been adopted and pursued by their oppressors! And what, let me ask, was the conduct of our venerable, and pious, and persecuted forefathers, the first settlers of this country, in relation to this subject? Holding them, as I do, in high respect and veneration, gladly would I draw a thick veil over that part of their conduct, which relates to religious creeds or tests; but the cause of truth and christian liberty *requires that it should not be concealed.* How great, alas! is the inconsistency and imperfection of man, even in *his best estate!* These same excellent and venerable pilgrims, who, while in England, could see with an eagle's eye the inconsistency, the oppression, the cruelty, and wickedness of their persecutors, and who were not sparing in their just complaints against them; these same venerable pilgrims, or at least their immediate descendants, formed and established *their* religious creeds and tests, and in no small degree *adopted and pursued the very measures, which they had censured and condemned,* as most unjustifiable and oppressive! As an exhibition of their spirit, and a specimen of their conduct, I take the liberty, although reluctantly, to state the following articles, which, in a neighbouring state, had the sanction of law, soon after its settlement:—"No man shall be a freeman, or give a vote, unless he be *converted*, and a member in full communion, of one of the churches *allowed* in this dominion.

"No *Quaker* or *Dissenter* from the *established worship* of this dominion shall be allowed to give a vote for the election of magistrates, or any officer.

"No *food* or *lodging* shall be offered to a *Quaker*, *Adamite*, or other *heretic.*

"If any person *turns Quaker*, he shall be banished, and not suffered to return, *but on pain of death.*

"No *priest* [probably Episcopalian] shall abide in the dominion; he shall be banished; *and suffer death on his return.*

"*Priests* may be seized by one *without a warrant.*

"When it appears that an accused [person] has confederates, and he refuses to discover them, *he may be racked.*

"No one shall read *common prayer books*, *keep Christmas* or set days, or play on any instrument of music, except the *drum*, *trumpet*, and *jewsharp*.

"Every male shall have his hair cut round according to a cap."

These articles or laws require no comment, to show the intolerant spirit of the first settlers of a neighbouring State, with respect to matters of religion. And they are but a *transcipt* of those laws which existed, and in but too many instances went into effectual operation, *nearer home*. How strange! that men, good men, our pious and venerable forefathers, while they had still in remembrance the "worm-wood and the gall," which a spirit of bigotry and persecution had compelled them to drink, should, and without *seeming to know it*, have been actuated by that *self-same spirit!* And is it not equally, or still more strange, that *we*, their descendants, in this age of light and knowledge, should be so much *affected*, so much influenced *by this unpleasant*, *sour*, *and injurious leaven!* How little soever we may be sensible of it, we are in *no small degree* thus unhappily leavened; and it is very possible that those of us who are the *most so*, are the *least suspicious* of it.

It is, indeed, true that a spirit of bigotry and persecution does not now operate among christians with that heat and violence, with which it heretofore has done; yet it is far from being extinguished. And that it is in no small degree kept alive and cherished through the instrumentality of creeds and articles of faith of human construction, cannot reasonably be questioned. By *these*, a middle wall of partition, strong and high, is erected between different denominations of christians, which in a great measure prevents that friendly, and charitable, and improving intercourse with each other, which the spirit of our holy and benevolent religion recommends and inculcates. And but for this separating wall, these different denominations of christians would not, it is confidently believed, view each other, as is now too much the case, with a juandiced and jealous eye; entertain towards each other unfavourable sentiments and hard feelings, and load each other with unfriendly appellations and opprobrious epithets. Nor, but for this same separating wall, would christians of the same denomination, and who, generally, harmonize in sentiment, be chargeable with so much *misrepresentation* of each other, with so much *alienation* in affection from each other, and with treating each other in a manner *so repugnant to the spirit and genius of the gospel*, as is now unhappily and lamentably the case. That human creeds have in a great measure been the occasion of this evil, admits of no reasonable doubt. And is it not highly probable, that were the religious tests for christian communion,

even in churches denominated orthodox,to have "free course," and fairly try the religious sentiments of orthodox christians, they would destroy christian intercourse and fellowship between the greater portion of these same christians, and break up a large portion of these same churches! That this would, indeed, be the case, there is but too much reason to believe. Were the creed or religious test of any particular church of this description but clearly understood, and an unqualified assent to it required, or any other assent, than a kind of *general and indefinite one*, but very few intelligent and conscientious christians, it is probable, would ever give their assent to it; nor would many of the existing members, I am persuaded, continue their relation to the church. But if this creed or test is not to be assented to in one and the same sense, but in as different senses, as assent is given to the thirty-nine articles of the church of England, what valuable purpose can be answered by it? Must not such an assent to it, be considered by every reflecting mind, as utterly unavailable to any good purpose? Besides, if creeds of orthodox churches were well understood, and assent to them required, as containing nothing but "pure, evangelical truth," how many of those churches, now in fellowship with each other, would, like the *Jews* and *Samaritans* have no further mutual religious intercourse! Whence, then, their *seeming* union? Were the subject but fairly examined, it would, I am persuaded, be found to arise from the considerations, that their creeds are understood and assented to in *different senses;* that they are assented to as *generally* true; that some of their articles are *neither explained nor understood;* that they have the sanction of *long usage and establishment*; and that certain words and phrases which they contain, although the invention of men, possess the charm of *sacred mystery*. But for these considerations, it can scarcely admit of doubt that the bond of union between orthodox churches and members of the same church, by virtue of human creeds or articles of faith, would be found as feeble as "the spider's attenuated thread." Indeed, were it not that christians, who are deemed orthodox, sympathize in the use of the word *trinity*, while their sentiments are *very* widely different in relation to its import, we have but too much reason to believe, they would mutually denounce and anathematize each other, as too heretical for mutual christian communion. The mere use of, or assent to this word, is *apparently* one of the most *important* ties of christian unity to many, who seem almost to claim, exclusively, the character and name of christians.

The concise history which has now been given of human creeds and articles of faith, as religious tests, with the re-

marks which have accompanied it, will in some good degree, and, I hope, intelligibly exhibit my views in relation to such creeds and articles. It must now be seen, I would presume, by Mr. A. that I am dissatisfied with, and am opposed to them as *having been* generally, in *times past*, not only useless to the cause and honour of pure and undefiled religion, but as having been the *occasion* of the evil attributed to them in my seasonable thoughts; that in more *modern times*, they have not been serviceable, but *injurious* to the christian cause, and that in *our times*, they are the occasion, if, of *any good*, yet of an *overbalancing evil*. And these are the sentiments which I had supposed were conveyed in an intelligible manner in my pamphlet. That they should have been otherwise understood by this gentleman, or by any attentive reader, is to me not a little surprising.

In page 7, Mr. A. introduces a quotation from the "celebrated *Mr. Saurin* and the apostle *James*," with the view to detect what I have said of human creeds as erroneous and heretical. The evils which have happened to the christian church he represents Mr. S. as ascribing not to human creeds, but to party spirit, as "that disposition which envenoms so many hearts, separates so many families, divides so many societies, which hath produced so many excommunications, and thundered out so many anathemas." From *James* he has cited the following passage; "Whence come wars and fightings among you. Come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members?" In connexion with these quotations he observes, "Nor was it human creeds that produced these lusts, &c."

If the gentleman can discover any thing in these quotations clashing with my views of human creeds, or with any sentiments I have advanced in relation to them, he possesses a sagacity, which must be peculiar to himself. The mischief I attributed to human creeds were attributed to them, not as the *prime* and *efficient* cause, but only as an *occasion*, or *occasional cause* from which the mischief resulted; nor can I easily conceive that the gentleman could have understood me in any other sense. But if he really did, as he seems to insinuate, I will correct his mistake, if words can do it, by avowing it as my belief that human creeds have *never* been the *prime* and *efficient cause* of the evils, which the celebrated *Saurin* and the apostle *James* ascribe to "party spirit" and the "lusts" of man. But that they have been the *occasion*, or *occasional cause* of a great portion of them, is a truth which cannot reasonably be questioned.

As a man of uncommon resources, both natural and acquired, Mr. *Saurin* is undoubtedly entitled to much celebrity; but certainly the *great Chillingworth* is not entitled to less; nor is his

authority to be deemed less valid. On the subject of human creeds he thus expresses himself. "This vain conceit, that we can speak of the things of God better than in the words of God; this deifying our own interpretations, and forcing them upon others; *this restraining the word of God from that latitude and generality, and the understandings of men from* THAT LIBERTY WHEREIN CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES LEFT THEM, is, and hath been the only fountain of all the schisms in the church."

Another English divine, *(Strype)* and of no contemptible name and talents, thus expresses his views of the subject. "It is the misery of christendom, that we should build too much upon articles of doctrine, upon opinions, tenets and systems; and they must be subscribed to, sworn to, and believed; which causeth almost all the division of the christian world. We are so earnest in asserting the orthodoxy of our own espoused doctrines, that we most lamentably fall out, break peace, lose charity, and wretchedly neglect the weightier matters, judgment, mercy and faith, and the practice of sincere truth and righteousness."

Should the quotation from *Saurin* be considered as clashing with my views with respect to human creeds, the quotations from *Chillingworth* and *Strype*, must be considered as *supporting* them. Nor could any human support, perhaps, be considered as more honorable and weighty. I, however, by no means consider the sentiments of Mr. Saurin in relation to the creeds under review, as differing either from the sentiments of the great men whom I have quoted, or from my own. And that they indeed do not, may I think be fairly inferred from the general tenor of his sentiments, so far as I am acquainted with them. I might fill pages with extracts from his sermons, which perfectly harmonize with my own sentiments on the subject of human creeds.*

What then could have induced Mr. A. to introduce into his letter the quotation from Mr. S. I am unable to say.

To the quotation from James—"Whence come wars and fightings among you, &c." I very readily assent, as containing the words of truth and soberness. But that this quotation should be considered as opposing the sentiment, that great and numerous evils have been occasioned by, or resulted from human creeds or articles of faith, I cannot easily comprehend. Nor do I find less difficulty to conceive that it should have a favorable aspect on "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," or "being zealous for the traditions of the fathers," or imposing upon those who are made free by the law of Christ,

* But this I shall decline as needless.

a yoke of bondage, by requiring assent to creeds of human device, instead of a creed composed of "sacred words," the words of inspiration. If my opponent would but be satisfied with this creed, we should neither of us very widely differ in sentiment, it is believed, either from the apostle *James*, or the celebrated *Saurin*. But until this creed, instead of creeds of human fabrication, shall be considered as "the best thing in the universe," and constituting "pure, evangelical holy truth," it is to be expected that unhallowed religious "wars and fightings" will unhappily and lamentably exist among us. Nor can we reasonably expect that these unchristian contentions and alienating contests will subside, until *Arius* and *Socinus*, *Luther* and *Calvin* shall be removed from the *chair of infallibility*, and *the bench of judgment;* and *Paul* and *Peter*, *James* and *John* shall occupy their places. Let us but agree to this arrangement, and reasonably may we expect a happy result.

In page 8, Mr. A. observes "Had this orthodox clergyman attributed the evils of which he complains to these sources," viz. to wicked men substituting abominable errors and superstitions in place of pure evangelical truth, and in violation of the rights of conscience, requiring subscription to these, &c. "he would have been more orthodox; he would have been correct."—As the orthodox clergyman *did* ascribe "the evils of which he complains, to these sources," it is hoped that his opponent will admit the *orthodoxy* and *correctness* of his *own concession*. By this, however, he does not mean to insinuate that the *best* of creeds of human device are chargeable with *no evil*. The creed even of *John Calvin* is not to be vindicated as perfectly correct and unexceptionable. Nor can it reasonably be questioned, that the accusation preferred against him by the learned *Castalio*, is founded in but too much truth. The accusation to which I refer is thus expressed—"that too many paid greater respect to his authority, than to the *truth*—that he acted the *pope*—that he persecuted those who would not sign *his* confession of faith, and that he denied to *others* the liberty which he took *himself*." That this was too much the character of that great reformer, must, with whatever reluctance, be acknowledged; and that traits of the same character have been but *too visible* in some of his followers, in successive generations down to the present day, can, but with an ill grace, be denied

My opponent in the same page proceeds to observe—"But to ascribe them" (the evils resulting from human creeds) chiefly, or in a great measure to the circumstance of christian churches requiring persons to assent to a creed embracing nothing but truth, as a term of communion or test of orthodoxy, merely because expressed in other language then *precisely* that

of scripture; than this I doubt whether there ever was or ever could be a more gross misrepresentation." And who, I desire to know, will controvert the truth of these observations? why then were they made? what is their bearing? These are questions, which it is beyond my power to decide.

After stating several arguments in page 8, which I had urged as objections to human creeds, my opponent observes in violation to them, "all which would have been very pertinent had a distinction been made between a creed exhibiting doctrines, the mere inventions of man, and one comprising the real doctrines of the gospel; and between the just and proper use and abuse of such an instrument." In reply to this I would observe, that I *had* particularly noticed a *particular creed*, which gave use to my observations on human creeds in general, which creed I considered with respect to one of its articles, at least, as the "mere invention of man," and which I supposed was not only *liable* to "abuse," but as actually abused, or *about to be abused;* and which, to my grief, I have since been informed has *actually* been abused or prostituted, in a manner not very honorary either to that "instrument," or to its framers and guardians. But if the gentleman would impose upon me the task of discriminating with precision between human creeds, "exhibiting doctrines the mere inventions of man, and the real doctrines of the gospel," I must beg leave to decline the undertaking, as impracticable. No religious creed or test of human construction is to be found, it is presumed, in christendom, which does not contain some real doctrines of the gospel; and I shall by no means undertake to prove, that any one is so free from error as justly to claim assent to it, as an indispensable "term of communion." Some, indeed, it may reasonably be supposed, contain less of error than others, and are subject to less "abuse;" but all human creeds are to be considered the same in principle, and as liable to so much error and abuse, and as calculated to produce so much evil, as justly to deserve, to say the least neglect and disuse. These are the sentiments which I exhibited in my Seasonable Thoughts, nor have I, as yet, found any reason to think them incorrect.

I am glad to find Mr. A. in pages, 8, 9, making the declaration, that he does not hold creeds containing "false doctrines, &c." in higher "veneration" than I do, and that he gives it as his opinion, that this is true also of his "christian brethren in general." It is devoutly to be hoped, and confidently to be expected, if this is *really* the case, that the reign of human creeds will soon happily terminate, and give place to the reign of the pure, and peaceable, and gentle doctrines of the Prince of Peace.

In page 9, the gentleman states a creed, as he is pleased to term it, extracted from my Seasonable Thoughts, and which, he observes, I had formed for my christian brother, telling him that "should one refuse to assent to this creed, he ought to be rejected as no christian. This same creed is thus expressed:—"But were he to deny God as the *Father of Jesus Christ*, and Jesus Christ as the *Son of God*, and the Holy Spirit as the *Comforter*, and as *reproving the world of sin, of righteousness and judgment*, you would not, it is presumed, hesitate to renounce him as a christian brother." In *this* quotation, the gentleman is correct. Nor will I say, that the *remarks* which he makes in relation to it, or rather in relation to its author, are not, in *his own estimation* equally correct. His remarks are: "Does he not, [the author] here unsay all he had said before? But it is not to be wondered at; error will be self-contradictory. It can't proceed without getting entangled in its own net!" In the same page he observes in relation to the same subject, that "with one dash of his pen he blots out the labour of all his pages." How far these remarks are pertinent and just, you, Sir, will judge from what I have said in my Seasonable Thoughts, pages 14, 15. "But if we *must* have a religious creed or articles of faith drawn up and methodised by any man or body of men, let the materials be collected from the scriptures of truth, and expressed as *far as practicable*, in *scriptural words*. To such a creed *no* christian will object. And to such a creed *all* christians, it should seem, must give a *decided preference*, who duly appreciate the sacred volume." You will now, Sir, if you please, look again at the above quotation as made by Mr. A. from my Seasonable Thoughts, and carefully compare it with this; and then say whether, instead of clashing, they do not *perfectly harmonize* with each other; and whether his remarks are not entirely irrelevant to the subject or point, at which he aims them! Is not the creed above stated, expressed, *as far as practicable*, in *scriptural language?* And have I any where opposed or discountenanced such a creed? What then could have been the object of my opponent in quoting that creed, and in remarking upon it in the manner he has done? And with what a spirit must those remarks have been made? He best can tell.

In the same page the gentleman in the same strain proceeds to say, "He [the orthodox clergymen] had conceded that creeds, catechisms, &c. were useful in aid of religious instruction and improvement; there he gave back part of the truth in question; but here, in forming a creed as a test of communion, the scriptural creed as above quoted, "he gives up the whole. I do not perceive how thus saying and unsaying a thing is better than saying nothing at all."

The only concession I have made in relation to this subject, is contained in the following extract (p. 14) of my seasonable thoughts. "I would not be understood as denouncing religious creeds, articles of faith, or catechisms indiscriminately, nor as discountenancing them," indiscriminately, "considered as *aids* to religious instruction and improvement. Such compositions undoubtedly have been, and now are, *in some instances*, useful." Now because I discountenance religious creeds of human devise as *terms of communion*, does it appear so *very evident*, that I am guilty of "saying and unsaying a thing;" that I "unsay all that I had said," &c. that I "blot out the labour of all my pages," because I admit that *some* religious creeds and catechisms are "useful in *aid of religious instruction and improvement.*" Or because I admit that *these* creeds and catechisms contain things which are *instructive* and *useful*, does it follow that I plead for creeds and catechisms *indiscriminately*, or even these *particular ones*, as *terms of communion*, when every thing which I have said upon the subject is evidently a plea *against them*, considered as *such terms!* Or does it so very evidently follow, that because I admit *some* creeds and catechisms are good things, and have a claim to christian patronage; I therefore admit they are *all*, without distinction, good things, and deserve the same patronage! If this be good logic and conclusive reasoning, then, and not otherwise, are the above observations of my opponent good logic and conclusive reasoning. But for his *defect* in logical *acumen*, or capacity for drawing just conclusions from given premises, he is not perhaps to be be censured; nor am I, for this, disposed to censure him. Yet if his object was to *pervert* the literal and obvious meaning of what I had said respecting creeds: to *impose* upon his readers; to place me in a *ridiculous* point of light, and to "make the *worse* appear the *better* reasoning," I cannot but think him a little blameable.

SECTION II.

Under this section (p. 9) Mr. A. observes of "creeds and confessions of faith, fabricated in other language than that of scripture, as tests of orthodoxy and communion," that "in our view they are highly important, useful, and necessary, and by no means to be discontinued." He adds, "as demonstration of this I submit the following remarks."

To the first article of these remarks I have nothing of importance to object, and especially as it contains no sentiments, which in the least degree clash with my own, respecting human creeds, but rather countenance and support them.

Under the second article he speaks of "the church of Rome," as having been "for ages the masterpiece of infernal cunning and malice to corrupt the earth and fill it with darkness and

misery." He adds, "and every church, in proportion as it departs from the purity of christian truth in principle and practice, becomes thus an engine of ruin to mankind." To these observations, as correct, I readily assent. But in what way or by what "engine" did these churches display their "infernal cunning, corrupt the earth, and effect the ruin of mankind," but by their religious creeds and establishments? To this source, in a great measure at least, are these dreadful events to be traced. And this is the very sentiment which I suggested in my seasonable thoughts, and particularly in the passage quoted by my opponent, in p. 8 of his letter, and which question he there opposes, or seems to oppose, as a very dangerous error, and to vindicate the creeds and establishments of the Romish church, and other corrupt churches, as "pure, evangelical, holy truth." But "I do not perceive how thus saying and unsaying a thing is better than saying nothing at all." If, however, I am to consider the gentleman as *abiding* by what he has last said upon the subject, as stated in the above quotation, I must consider him as vindicating the cause of truth, however he may not extend it against the erroneous doctrine of human creeds. And most readily do I concur with him in the sentiment, as expressed, (p. 9.) that "it is the indispensable duty of every christian to endeavour to guard the church against the least departure from the faith once delivered to the saints." But how can this departure be more effectually guarded against than by opposing, by bringing into disrepute, and by prostrating religious creeds and tests of human invention.

I readily concur also with Mr. A. in what he says, page 11, in relation to false principles and doctrines. "A false principle or doctrine," he observes, "may descend from age to age, live and operate on the minds of millions, after he who first broached it is dead. It clothes falsehood with divine authority, binds the conscience and makes strong the bonds of iniquity in him who believes it."—And because there is, and always has been so much of the leaven of this "false principle or doctrine," in human creeds and inventions, I feel constrained to bear my testimony against them as tests of orthodoxy, and terms of communion; and earnestly to recommend the Bible creed as a substitute, in which none of this injurious leaven is to be found.

Under the third article, p. 11, Mr. A. speaking of errors in judgment relative to the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, as an evidence of an heart at enmity with God, quotes, in confirmation of this truth, a very pertinent, monitory, and I should think, to *some men*, a very alarming passage from the writings of the inspired Paul. The passage is the following. "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words,

even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud knowing nothing." He might have very pertinently proceeded in his quotation, thus—" But doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, &c."—Whether this passage is to be applied to those who advocate a scriptural creed, expressed in the " wholesome words—the words of our Lord Jesus Christ,"—or to those who, rejecting these words as a test of orthodoxy and communion, insist upon a creed in which but very few of these words are found, you, Sir, will judge!

Passing over several observations of my opponent, as requiring no particular remark, I will invite your attention to a passage in p. 12, of his letter. It is as follows.—" The Jews professed a most sacred regard for the writings of Moses as a divine revelation, yet Christ charges them with not believing those writings. Like thousands of modern christians they had a superstitious reverence for the letters, syllables and words of scripture; but entertained an implacable hatred of the truths, of which these very words were the signs or representatives." Here I would ask, for what purpose did Mr. A. make these remarks, but that they should be applied to those christians, who plead for the scriptures as a complete rule of faith and practice, to the exclusion of human creeds or articles of faith? But to whom, if to any denomination of christians, the application is *really* to be made, you will judge for yourself. Why, Sir, did the Jews hate the real doctrines or truths of the Bible? Was not this one very important reason of it, that they taught and received, " for doctrines the commandments of men," and held them in higher estimation than Bible doctrines or truths? because they " transgressed the commandment of God by their tradition?" because by this, they " made the commandment of God of none effect," and because they were " zealous for the traditions of the fathers," and by them were " spoiled?" Had they not been attached, even to infatuation, to human creeds and articles of faith, they would, beyond all reasonable doubt, much better have understood the " writings of Moses," and much better have profited by them. And were it not for the superstitious reverence which is paid to human creeds by " thousands of modern christians," it cannot reasonably be doubted that they would much more highly respect, and much better understood the doctrines of the Bible, and derive from them much more instruction and benefit, than they now do. And what is it but trifling with a most interesting and solemn subject, when these same modern christians " profess a most sacred regard for the writings of Moses"—of the prophets—of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, and yet re-

fuse to admit to their communion, and to hold fellowship with those, who profess a cordial assent to these writings, merely because they will not subscribe to articles of faith of their own devising.

To show " the real necessity and vast utility of creeds expressed in other language than that of scripture." Mr. A. states a case, p. 13, consisting of several suppositions and circumstances. He supposes a person to deny " a resurrection of the material body;" that in doing this, " he denies the whole Bible," and that this same man " comes forward and desires communion with the church."—Now this man must be denied his request—he must not be admitted to christian communion. But how is he to be prevented ? The gentleman observes that " the most correct method" of procedure, to prevent this evil " would be to put the question" to this heretic " in writing." " Do you believe that by the terms 'shall come forth' is meant a real resurrection of the human body ?" " Here," observes this writer, " a bar would be thrown in his way, and the church shut against him." And here is exhibited the *real necessity* and *vast utility* of creeds expressed in other language than that of scripture !

That it is possible a man may be found among us so hypocritical, and who is so lost to all principle and sense of propriety, as to be desirous to become a communicant with a christian church, who " denies the whole Bible" as above stated, may *possibly* be admitted. And let it be admitted that thousands of such characters may possibly be found among us, and that they are in the highest degree unsuitable subjects for christian communion. Yet as they are desirous to get into the church, and if practicable, *determined to carry the point*, how is the evil to be prevented ! By putting the question to them either " orally" or in " writing," whether they believe in a *real* resurrection of the human body ! This is the " bar" of iron to fasten and guard the door of the church to prevent their intrusion ! But who that duly weighs the subject can doubt that the hardened sword or battle-ax of infidelity will, as did the sword of Alexander in another case, cut in twain this bar of security with a single stroke ? Let these infidel and unprincipled men but say, that they believe in " a real resurrection of the human body," and the bar is sundered—the door of the church is widely opened, and a seat prepared for them at the communion table ! And *what*, I desire to know, would be likely to prevent such men from making such a goodly profession of faith ? But after all, it is scarcely a supposeable case that any man of this description among us would be desirous of " communion with the church ;" yet if a solitary, or a few solitary instances were

to exist, human creeds would surely be *no barrier* to the evil. Such, then, is the *real necessity* and *vast utility* of *such creeds!*

" A bare inspection of this statement is sufficient to shew the impertinence of many things which this writer advances" in favor " of human creeds."

My opponent observes, p. 14, under article 1—" If we are restricted to the words that the scriptures use as signs of ideas in proposing our creed of religion, as a term of communion, then a translation of the sacred canon is unlawful. No one should be required to believe it, except it be read to him in Hebrew, Chaldaic or Greek. For it was not in the language of any translation that the Holy Spirit spake." In reply to this I would observe, that if the writer means to insinuate, that in proposing a scriptural creed as a term of communion, I should require or expect assent to the *mere* " words of scripture" without any regard to their *import*, or the ideas which they contain, the insinuation is as puerile as it is unfounded—as unavailing as it is disingenuous. But if this be not his meaning, I know not how to understand him. I observe further, if the gentleman means to infer from any thing I have said in my seasonable thoughts, that the " translation of the sacred canon is unlawful," his inference is without a premiss. But if he means only to say, or insinuate that according to my sentiments, it would be unlawful to require an *absolutely unqualified assent* to the common version, or any other version of the original scriptures, as an *indispensible requisite* to christian communion, I freely acknowledge that I am neither able, nor disposed to refute the charge or insinuation. I *do* think it unlawful to require such an assent of any one, as a " term of communion.—*Some explanation of this subject however may be necessary.*

It is a fact, which none who are acquainted with the subject will controvert, that there are thousands of words in the version of the Bible in common use, which answer to no corresponding words in the original. They were supplied by the judgment of the translators to illustrate the meaning of the original texts. And that there are some incorrect translations of the original, and some errors in its various and multiplied transcriptions, is, to say the least, very possible.

These things considered, I cannot but think it very improper, highly unjustifiable, and if you please, *unlawful*, to require assent of any one to the translation of the scriptures as authorized by *royal*, or any *other human authority*, as *perfectly correct*, or as perfectly corresponding to the original. Nothing more, I am persuaded can reasonably be required than an assent to the Bible as we find it in the common version, as a revelation from God, and as containing all that is necessary, as a rule of faith and practice. But to require assent to the *translation* of the

original scriptures, as true or correct in every *word*, and *jot*, and *tittle*, would be, in effect, to require a belief that the transcribers and translators of them were *inspired men*, or *incapable of error*. Nothing but the highest degree of inconsideration and weakness would require this. But as the signatures of a divine original are so visibly and strongly impressed upon the sacred scriptures, as we find them in the translation, as to enforce a conviction of this truth; it cannot be unreasonable to require an assent to them as above stated, in order to christian communion. Nor, in requiring this assent of communicants, or of those who desire to become communicants, is it necessary, I humbly conceive, to read to them the *Hebrew*, *Chaldaic*, or *Greek scriptures*. But should any difficulty oppose itself to the requiring of an unqualified assent to the scriptures, as they stand in our translation, the difficulty most surely cannot be removed by requiring assent to a human creed, or *explanation* of those scriptures.

Under article third, p. 14, my opponent observes that "requiring assent to an human creed, tends to check the progress of irreligion, error and delusion." As the gentleman uses the word *creed*, *indefinitely*, his observation may be understood of *any creed*. Nor could he have any just ground to tax me with disingenuity, were I to charge him with saying, that assent to any creed of the *church of Rome*, or of any other *corrupt church*, tends to check the progress of the evils above stated, and especially as he has apparently spoken of those creeds, and more than once, in the highest strains of eulogy. I am, however, willing to allow that by human creed he intends ~~that~~ his *own creed*, and such other creeds as are modled according to the *fashion of this*. But if he thus restricts the meaning of the word, he excludes from the catalogue of creeds, probably, not less than ninety-nine in a hundred, as creeds to which assent ought not to be required. Now if assent to but one creed in a hundred, tends to *check* the progress of "irreligion, error and delusion," an assent to all the rest, I should suppose, would tend to promote these evils. Hence, the sum of evil to that of good, which may be supposed to result from assenting to human creeds may be considered according to this estimate, as about ninety-nine to one. Nor is it very certain that this one per cent. of supposed good is not to be placed to the amount of evil. The gentleman adds—"How a man's assenting to one truth, will prevent the attainment of more, I know not." Nor, I presume, does any other man know.

But it is not very difficult to conceive, that assenting to *one error* would be likely to lead into *others*. As then it is possible, that one error at least, may be found in the creed of my opponent, an assent to it may be found possibly exposed to

danger. Is it not, therefore, the dictate of prudence and safety to withhold assent to it?

In pages 14, 15, under his fourth article Mr. A. seems to apprehend that requiring assent to a human creed as a "term of communion," will be opposed on the ground, that it interferes with the right of private judgment. Nor was this expectation unnatural. But how does he meet and repel the objection? "To require a person," he observes, "to judge as we do in regard to religion in order to communion, is the forbidding him to judge at all." Whether this be the case or not, he will not forbear, it is presumed, to exercise his judgment; and should he exercise it as he ought, he will judge, I should think, that the *requisition ought not to be made at all*, and that he *would never submit to it at all.* The gentleman proceeds: "To compel him by external force to say our creed is true, contrary to the conviction of his own mind; this would be to violate this sacred right," the right of private judgment. "But to direct a person seriously and prayerfully to study the holy scriptures, and to judge for himself, and to tell him in case his views should accord with ours, we would admit him to our communion, how this interferes with the right of private judgment, I am yet to learn." In what light I am to view this extraordinary passage, I find it not a little difficult to determine. Whence no small difficulty arises in shaping a pertinent answer to it. I will, however, make the attempt. To *compel* a person to say that a creed is true, contrary to the conviction of his own mind, is a violation, it seems, of the sacred rights of his conscience. But how is this a violation of these rights? Does it *oblige* a person to believe *that*, which he is persuaded *is not true?* Surely not. No external force, or penalty, or torture, can produce this effect. It is impossible. Conscience *will be free* as to its dictates. Nor is there any man but will judge for himself, whatever external force may be used to prevent it. The torture of an inquisition may, indeed, constrain a man to *say*, that he believes a *creed to be true* when he verily *believes* it to be *grossly erroneous.* And this, there is too much reason to apprehend, has often been the case; but the dictates, both of the conscience and understanding, are left free; nor can their freedom in this sense ever be violated. This compelling force, however, is a most unreasonable and *cruel act.* And, in *this sense*, it unquestionably violates, if the expression be admitted, the rights of conscience. But what is the mighty difference with respect to the rights of conscience, between the *external force* under consideration, and the *imposing* of a human creed upon one, who believes it to be erroneous? The dread of exclusion from a

great and precious privilege, or of being accounted a *heretic*, may constrain him to *equivocate;* but in case he is too honest and too independent to do this, he must be set aside as unworthy of christian communion, however exemplary, humble, pious, or devout in his conduct; or however correct may be his religious sentiments according to the scriptural standard.

Now, say what you please to this man respecting your liberality, and christian moderation, and tenderness towards him; tell him as often as you will, that you do not interfere with his religious rights; *will* he, *ought* he to be satisfied? Not a whit more; I humbly conceive, than the man from whom external force attempts to extort the declaration of belief in a creed contrary to the conviction of his own mind, in case his tormenters should say the same things. In both cases a person must suffer privation and positive evil, if he neglect to acknowledge for truth, what he believes to be error. In the one case, the suffering is principally inflicted upon the body; in the other, principally upon the mind. But is not *mental* suffering as truly an evil as that which is endured by the body? And may it not, to say the least, be *equally just?* In both cases punishment is annexed to the non-assent to a human creed. In both cases the authority of making and imposing the creed is the same, *a self-created authority.* If, in the *one case*, the creed is erroneous, so it may be in the other. And if in the one case the *rights of conscience are violated*, I see not but the *same rights are violated* also in the other case. The cases, so far as I can see, are the *same in kind*, however they may differ from each other *in relation to circumstance.* The supposed direction given to the person in the case last stated, "seriously and prayerfully to study the holy scriptures and to *judge for himself*," he would be likely to consider, and not altogether without reason, *as a subterfuge unbecoming the christian character, and as an insult offered to his understanding.*

My opponent having stated the two cases above considered, proceeds to ask:—"Have we not as good right to judge for ourselves as others?" This question is somewhat ambiguous. But if the proposer is to be understood as asking whether he, and his partizans, have not as good a right to judge for themselves in relation to religious subjects, as others have to judge for themselves? I answer, yes. Yet I would, by no means, be considered as making the concession, that either *these* or *those* have *any right* to judge themselves vested with the right to exercise dominion over the faith or consciences of others; or to make for each other tests of orthodoxy and christian communion; or to erect barriers to exclude *those* from the special ordinances of the gospel, for *whom* the great

Head of the church provided them. Nor, as I conceive, has this writer or any other man *any right*, on *gospel principles*, to embrace and patronize a system of *religious error;* and much less to *enforce that system* to the injury of the cause of truth, and to an interferance with the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.

The gentleman proceeds :—"And among other things" have we not a right "to judge, in the light of scripture, that unity of sentiment in regard to the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, ought to be insisted on as a term of communion?" To this I observe, that Mr. A. and all other christians have a right to judge in the *light of scripture* respecting that unity of sentiment in the *fundamental doctrines* of the gospel, which ought to constitute the term of christian communion; and respecting all other religious subjects. And happy would it be for the christian cause, and for the unity of the christian faith, were christians to view these subjects in this mild and clear light. But by making use of lights which "shed darkness visible," christians have lamentably destroyed "the unity of the spirit," and broken "the bond of peace." If they would claim no other right of judging about "fundamental doctrines," and terms of christian communion, but in "the light of scripture," human creeds as religious tests, would, it is presumed, be abandoned, and cease to be a subject of unpleasant and angry litigation among christians; correct knowledge would increase; the social and religious affections would, with more assiduity, be cherished and improved; christians would see, more than they now do, "eye to eye;" they would be more closely joined together in mind, in judgment, and n heart; and the church of Christ would soon "look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, beautiful as *Tirzah*, comely as *Jerusalem*, and terrible" to human policy and wicked devices, "as an army with banners." O, that christians universally might be persuaded to come to this true light, and make it the sole guide of their faith, and directory of their conduct!

In page 15, my opponent asks :—"Is it not the indispensable duty of every man to exercise this right," the right of private judgment? This question he implicitly answers in the words of inspiration. "Search the scriptures." "Judge ye what I say." "These," he very justly adds, "are christian precepts." But to what purpose is it to "*say*, and do not!" To direct christians to *search the scriptures* and to make up their minds or judgment of doctrines, *by what Christ says;* and then to *test* their orthodoxy and qualifications for christian communion, *not* by the scriptures, *not* by what Christ says; *but by a human creed*, by what *unauthorized man says!* To

do this, appears, I must say, not only inconsistent in itself, but inconsistent with that unrivalled attachment, respect, and reverence to which the gospel has so just and indispensable a claim. Let "these christian precepts" be but duly regarded, and a *due regard*, it is presumed, will soon be paid to *human creeds*, or articles of faith of *man's device*.

In the same page the gentleman observes, "It is impossible in the nature of things to judge that any particular principle is true without at the same time implicitly condemning every opposite error. And this is indeed the thing so offensive to modern charity."—That it is impossible to judge any principle to be *true*, without judging an opposite principle to be *erroneous*, is an unquestionable truth. And it is a truth no less unquestionable, that we cannot but condemn as an error, what we are convinced is *really* so.

If by "modern charity" the gentleman intends that "*anti-christian liberality*" which advocates the inspired scriptures, as the only infallible standard of christian faith and practice, the correctness of his charge against it, is, I should think, to say the least, rather questionable. And what could have induced the gentleman so peremptorily to say that *this charity* is offended, when error is condemned, is not a little difficult even to conjecture. Nor will it be lees difficult to himself, I should suppose, to give a consistent and satisfactory account of the matter; for he observes in relation to this same charity, page sixteenth, if I understand his meaning, that according to its decision, "It is no matter what we think of God, nor how we worship him, provided we live together in external harmony and friendship." Now, if the subjects of this charity think it a matter of indifference "what opinion we form of God," whether right or wrong, or "how we worship him," whether in "pretence" or "heartily," I cannot easily conceive that they would be *justly offended* with us, either for *condemning error*, or *vindicating truth*. But is it indeed true that *any* sect or denomination of christians among us, do really believe that it is no matter what we think of God, or how we worship him, &c." If this be the case, I most certainly know not, nor can I conjecture, where they are to be found. Although I would not be understood as impeaching the integrity of Mr. A. or as questioning the purity of his motive, in making the above observation, yet I do not hesitate to say—indeed a conviction of duty constrains me to say, that I am fully persuaded his assertion is founded in ignorance or gross mistake. This assertion and others of like kind, which are but too often made, are likely to produce the most *unjust* and *injurious* impressions on the minds of those, who *receive them as truth*. And such impressions are but in too many instances, and too deeply made to be

easily effaced. Hence arise an uncharitable, censorious, bitter and dividing spirit, and its unhappy and lamentable consequences. The sin of such gross misrepresentation admits of no other apology than that, to which the sin of ignorance is entitled. Although the sin may be considered as venial, it ought never to be exempted from pointed reprehension, and the just "sharpness of rebuke."

Because in my seasonable thoughts I had expressed it as my belief that the rules of faith and practice are laid down in the bible in "so plain and intelligible a manner," as to render useless human creeds; and because I suggested that the advocates of such creeds "*seem* to say that their pens are more correct and luminous than the pens of inspired men," my opponent implicitly taxes me (p. 17) with inconsistency. "I would ask," he says, "how do creeds and confessions of faith, in other words than those of scripture, impeach the perspicacity of the language of inspiration, any more than this clergyman's sermons or exhortations." In answer to this, I would ask, whether in explaining in sermons a passage of scripture, (if it require explanation,)the best aid which can be employed is not scripture itself, or such passages as are parallel with, and illustrative of the passage to be explained? This, I would presume, will be admitted. And ought it not also to be admitted that the words of scripture, containing truths the most interesting and necessary to be known, are so perspicuous as to need no explication by words of human device? Are not such truths plain and easy to be understood? What then should be the principal object of a public religious teacher in addressing his hearers, but to recommend those doctrines and precepts, already sufficiently plain and intelligible, to their belief and practice; and this, by the force of argument, by the exhibition of motives, by the fervour of affectionate zeal, and by the most solemn sanctions? This mode of explaining scripture, when explanation is necessary, and this mode of enforcing its plain and luminous truths, it is believed, is the most judicious and useful.

My opponent observes, in the same page :—"No doubt the scriptures are sufficiently clear and intelligible to answer all the purposes of a revelation in regard to the upright and faithful," and that "the necessity of human creeds does not arise from the want of perspicuity in the scriptures, but from the dispositions of sinners to pervert them." This concession of the gentleman seems to augur favourably in support of the inspired scriptures, as the only standard of faith and practice; and in relation to the inutility and disuse of human creeds and standards. Since the scriptures, according to this writer, are *beyond a doubt*, sufficiently clear and intelligible to answer *all* the purposes of revelation with respect to upright men, or such

as are admitted, or are admissible to christian communion, no human creed or articles of faith are necessary or needful, it should seem, as a *test of their faith*, or as a *bond of their union.* But human creeds he urges are necessary on account of the "disposition of sinners to pervert the scriptures."

That sinners are disposed to pervert or wrest the scriptures will not be denied; and that they actually do this, in many instances, even to their destruction, there is but too much reason to believe. But how is this evil to be prevented? By means of human creeds! This expedient it should seem cannot be needful; for the "upright and faithful" can, as far as it is necessary, *discover* the errors of the "wicked," by the *light and truth of scripture*, otherwise the scriptures would not be to them "sufficiently clear and intelligible to answer *all the purposes of revelation.*" If upright and faithful men, or in other words, if orthodox ministers and churches find sufficient light in the bible to lead them into all necessary truth and the path of duty, why should they make use of the light of human creeds as of *vast importance*, and even *necessary* to this purpose? For my part I cannot see, I must confess, either the necessity, the vast importance, or even the *least degree* of utility of this expedient. *More* than *sufficient* light, I should think, could in no case be *necessary.* But if upright and faithful men find light *enough* in the bible to direct them into the path of truth and duty, *without* the light of human creeds, to them, most surely the light of human creeds must be needless. But what can be the *use* of such creeds in the *hands of the wicked! They* would be likely, I should suppose, to make a *bad use* of them. And this my opponent has admitted either explicitly or virtually, and in several places in his letter. I see not, then, but human creeds, notwithstanding all that has been urged in their support, must be considered, and even according to my opponent's concession, as unavailing and useless.

SECTION III.

Under this section (p. 17) Mr. A. observes, "this writer" (the orthodox clergyman) "abounds in grievous insinuations against the advocates of human creeds, which have but very little foundation." The concession made in this extract, I cannot but hope is ominous also of good, with respect to the inspired scriptures as the *only* standard of christian faith and practice. If my "grievous insinuations against" them, or their "advocates" have, and in the estimation too of my opponent, a *real* "foundation," I cannot but indulge the hope, when it is more thoroughly examined, the gentleman will be convinced that the foundation is deeply laid, that its extent is sufficiently broad, and its materials sufficiently firm to sustain

the weighty and useful fabrick, which I have erected upon it. And that this will in due time be the case—that he will frankly acknowledge it, and afford his ready assistance in completing the structure, is not impossible. All this is indeed highly probable, if he will but be at the pains to *examine the subject* in the manner, in which it is believed *it ought to be examined.*

In the same page my opponent somewhat more than insinuates, that the opposers of human creeds consider " truth and error in the judgment of men as perfectly indifferent, as to any influence they can have upon moral character." He adds, " that this antichristian liberality has a powerful influence in producing this mighty zeal against human creeds is evident from this. These men would be just as much opposed to a creed, drawn up wholly in scripture language, as to one expressed in words of human device, if any definite meaning were affixed to each article, as the sense of the Holy Ghost, and were insisted upon as a term of communion."

This insinuation or rather charge is of a very serious nature. If well founded, the writer, in making it, is entitled to, and will have, I presume, the approbation and thanks of all good men. " But if the charge be groundless he merits their severest censure and rebuke. And that he really does merit this censure and rebuke, I must, though reluctantly, believe, until he shall produce some satisfactory evidence, which he has not done, to substantiate the heavy charge. Are the opposers of human creeds *perfectly indifferent* with respect to " truth and error ?" Why then do they *oppose* the *error*, or, if my opponent will have it so, the *truth* of these creeds ! If they believe that truth and error have no " influence on moral character," why do they vindicate the pure and uncorrupted truth of the Bible, as the only *safe* and adequate standard of faith and practice ? and why do they assign it, as the motive or reason of their conduct, that this truth is the best standard, as a preservative against the abounding of depravity of heart and of morals, and as the best security to moral rectitude with respect both the " inner and outward man ?" This I should think could be considered as hardly compatible with *perfect indifference* to truth and error as to any influence they can have upon moral character !—Mr. A. may indeed ascribe to the conduct of these men the most unworty motives ; such motives as they solemnly disavow. He may also charge them with perfect indifference as to uttering truth and falsehood. But should he do this, I hope it will be remembered, that assertion, and especially when there is *no ground* for it, is somewhat different from proof. I hope also it will not be forgotten, that gospel charity is neither *disposed* to speak, or even to think evil of any set of men, or of any man ; and will *never do it* without con-

straining conviction of duty, arising from *evidence*. He may speak also of these men as antichristian, or the followers of antichrist, and as much opposed to a scriptural creed, as to a creed of human device. These, and such like things the gentleman may say of the opposers of human creeds. Indeed such things *are* sometimes said of them, and on *such occasions* and in *such a manner*, by men from whose intelligence and sacred character, better things might be reasonably expected.—But what is the great and important good which they achieve by this expedient? Do they promote the cause of truth and gospel charity? This is not to be admitted. Do they gain to themselves the reputation of uncommon sanctity, correctness of sentiment, laudable zeal, and able defenders of the faith? This may indeed be the ease in relation to the ignorant and credulous. But to men of information and discernment, this conduct must appear as it ought—*in its proper light*. And it is devoutly to be hoped that the time is not far distant when these same men will see their own conduct in this same light.

But my opponent may think, perhaps, that he has unanswerably supported his charge against the opposers of human creeds, that they are "just as much opposed to a creed, drawn up wholly in scripture language, as to one expressed in the words of human device. But how has he supported this charge? "To determine this matter," he begs leave, "to form a short creed, wholly in scripture language, and affix a definite meaning to it."

THE CREED.

Article 1. The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, *nor* indeed can be. Rom. 3, 7.

Definite meaning. The heart of man is by nature full of opposition to God and devoid of the least degree of friendly affection to him.

Article 2. This is the true God and eternal life. 1 John, 5,20.

Definite meaning. The Lord Jesus Christ is himself self-existent, independent Deity.

Article 3. These shall go away into everlasting punishment. Matt. 25, 46.

Definite meaning. The future punishment of men who die in their sins, will be absolutely endless.

Here you have the short creed of Mr. A. and, as he says, *wholly* in scripture language. If by this he means that he has quoted the words of scripture exactly as they stand in the texts to which he refers, he is not exactly correct in his assertion, as those words are not exactly transcribed. Although this, I presume, was owing to inadvertence, yet as his creed is so short, and as he peremptorily asserts that it is *wholly* in scripture language, he deserves, perhaps, a little reprehension.

" Now I would ask, says the gentleman, the Socinian, the Arminian, the Universalist, and even this orthodox clergyman, if he would not be as loath to subscribe this creed, if he must profess to understand it in the sense given, as if it had been drawn up in language of human device." He adds—" His answer, I apprehend, would in a great measure, develope the secret of this business."—As I most sincerely wish that *the secret* of this business might be *fully developed*, so I feel disposed to answer the question without the least degree of reserve or equivocation ; yet I find no small degree of difficulty in answering it with pertinence, because I think it very doubtful, to say the least, whether I understand its import or meaning. If the gentleman would be understood as asking, whether I should be willing to subscribe this creed as an *exact* quotation from the Bible, I answer *no ;* and for this very good reason, that it is *not* exactly quoted. If he is to be understood as asking, whether I should be willing to subscribe to what he calls the definite meaning, which he has affixed to the scriptural creed, I answer *no ;* because I think that this same *definite* meaning, is *not* a definite meaning ; and because, instead of a scriptural creed, it is a creed of human device, the *very thing* which I have *opposed* in my seasonable thoughts, and in this defence of them.

If he is to be considered as asking, whether I should be willing to subscribe his creed as a complex thing, partly divine and partly human, I again answer *no ;* because I do not like such a *heterogeneous mixture.* But if I am to understand him as asking, whether I am willing to subscribe or assent to the several texts of scripture which compose the creed above stated, it would be needless to answer yes, as I have fully expressed my sentiments in favor of such a creed. But subscribing to this creed, he seems to suppose is precisely the same thing as subscribing to his *exposition* or *definite meaning* of it ; and therefore that a refusal to subscribe to this exposition or meaning, would be precisely the same thing as a refusal to subscribe his *short creed wholly in scripture language.* This, if I understand him, is his view, and his reasoning in relation to the subject. But of the clearness of his views, and the correctness of his logic, all who are capable of judging, *will judge ;* nor can it reasonably be doubted that they will judge *correctly.*

The definite meaning which the gentleman has affixed to his scriptural creed, however it may appear to others, appears to me not a little deficient both in exactness and truth.

Article 1.—" The carnal mind is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." According to the gentleman's definite meaning of this article, " the heart of man is by nature full of opposition to God, and

devoid of the least degree of friendly affection to him." In the view of this definite meaning I beg leave to inquire, whether by *heart* of man we are to understand *moral affections* or *exercises?* If so, I would ask, how can these affections or exercises be *filled* with opposition to God! But if by heart he means a certain *principle* or *taste*, in distinction from affections or exercises, I would ask whether this principle or taste, can be a *recipient* of opposition to God? And if so, whether it be *itself* a bad thing in a moral view? Or whether the *opposition* with which it is filled be a morally bad thing? Or whether he would predicate moral depravity of *both?* I would further enquire, whether the term *opposition* does not express malevolence or hatred, as operating with *less* strength and violence, than is expressed by the word *enmity?* I beg leave to ask, again, whether the statement, that "the *carnal mind is* enmity against God" conveys precisely the same idea as the statement, that "the *heart* of man is *full*," or is *filled* with "opposition to God?" If by the terms *by nature*, with application to man the gentleman means his character as he comes into the world; and if he would be understood as saying that every, or any child of Adam, commences existence with a heart full of *exercises* of opposition and hatred against God, the sentiment is more easily advanced than substantiated. If by the heart of man "devoid of the least degree of friendly affection to God," be meant as an illustration of the carnal mind as "not subject to the law of God, *neither indeed can be*," I can see but very little analogy, I must confess, between the words of the text and the illustration. The carnal mind, the apostle says, *cannot* be subject to the *law* of God. The meaning of this declaration, according to Mr. A. if I understand him, is, that the heart of man is *devoid* of the least degree of friendly affection to *God*. Is this the meaning, the *definite* meaning of the Apostle! If the gentleman does not mean to say it is, I cannot find any definite meaning in what he does say; nor do I find any attempt he has made to illustrate the latter part of the verse which composes the first article of his scriptural creed. Yet he has affixed a definite meaning to that article, yes! the *exact meaning* of the inspired Apostle!! If the gentleman believes that he has done justice to the text, his belief, I presume, must be *peculiar* to himself; for it is not a little difficult to conceive, that a more indefinite sense could be affixed to it by any honest man, acquainted with the meaning of words. And yet this same definite meaning of the Apostle's words must be subscribed, or assented to, as a term or condition of christian communion! a meaning which Paul, could he be consulted on the subject, would, I am persuaded, reject as *very loose and indeterminate*, if not as a *gross perversion* of his real meaning.

Whether Mr. A. has been more successful in affixing a definite meaning to the second article of his scriptural creed, is now to be considered.

Article 2.—"This is the true God and eternal life;" 1 John v. 20.

Definite meaning:—"The Lord Jesus Christ is himself self-existent, independent Deity."

That this is really the definite meaning of the text in the estimation of the gentleman, I would by no means question; but that he should have been so peremtory in his assertion that it is so, must have arisen, it is presumed, from his not having duly attended to the subject. Although I will not premptorily say, that he has grossly perverted the text, by affixing to it an entirely wrong meaning, yet I do think there is much reason to believe that he has really done so. That the meaning of the text may be more obvious, I will copy it entire, with the verse immediately preceding it. "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." Here it is distinctly to be remembered, that the Apostle had mentioned *God* in the preceding verse. He then proceeds to say, "*We know that* the Son *of God is come, and hath given us an understanding*," hath illuminated our minds by his divine doctrine, confirmed by miracles.

"*That we may know him that is true*," or the *true God.* Here it is particularly to be noted, that Jesus Christ is represented *not* as the *only* true God, nor as the *true* God, but as a person or being distinct from this God.

"*And we are in him that is true*," in him, who is the *true God.*

"*Even in his Son Jesus Christ.*" Here it is to be observed that the word *even* is not the Greek, but was supplied by the translators. The Greek only is, *in his Son Jesus Christ;* that is *by* or *through* his Son. That the preposition *in* should, in this place, have been rendered *by* or *through*, there is much reason to believe. This preposition, in Greek, is not unfrequently thus rendered in the New-Testament. It is, indeed, rendered *through* in this very passage in the old English version printed 1549; nor can any good reason be urged, it is confidently believed, against the correctness of this rendering.

"*This is the true God*," viz. that person or being whom Jesus Christ "hath given us an understanding to know," even "him that is true," that is the *only* true God, the *Father.* This, I conceive, is the just construction of the sentence.

But as Jesus Christ is the person last mentioned, many suppose that the word *this* must be understood of *him*, as being the nearest antecedent. But it is to be remembered, that "when there is something in a passage or sentence, or in the connexion which requires it, the relative or definitive pronoun not only may, but often does and must refer to a remote antecedent, as that which was uppermost in the writer's thoughts, and principally aimed at in the whole discourse." These remarks, it is believed, apply to the passage under consideration; so that *this* refers to *him*, even to him who is the *true God*, and not to Jesus Christ. In support of this construction several examples occur in this very Epistle, and a multitude of others in the inspired scriptures, in which relatives and pronouns refer, not to the *nearest*, but to *remote antecedents*.

It may be further observed, that eminent writers, whose acquaintance with the early christian fathers is unquestionbly intimate, affirm, that these same fathers of the three first centuries, refer this text to God the Father. And that the pronoun *this*, is thus to be referred seems evident from the consideration that the Father is, by this same writer, St. John, called the *only true God*, as *contradistinguished* from our Lord Jesus Christ, in John xvii. 3, with which compare 1 Thessalonians, i. 9, 10, "How ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and *true God;* and to wait for *his Son* from heaven, whom he raised from the dead," &c. It may not be unimportant farther to remark, that God the Father is, in a number of scripture passages, opposed to idols. This circumstance seems to furnish additional evidence that by *true God* in the passage under review, we are to understand *God the Father*, as in this passage he is opposed to idols. Of this you will be convinced by comparing it with the subsequent verses.

"*And eternal life.*"—This same true God, even the Father, is eternal life to his children, as he is the great Author of that life, in that by his *own self-moved benevolence* he made provision, by which it is to be obtained, in the gift of his own Son. Agreeably our Saviour observed:—"This is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

In the view of these things, does not the evidence appear very forcible, if not demonstrative, that by *true God*, the *God* and *Father* of our *Lord Jesus Christ* is intended? Must not the following construction, then, of the passage be allowable and just:—"We know that the *Son* of *God* is come and hath given us an understanding, that we may know *God* that *is true;* and we are in *God* that *is true*, *by* or *through* God's Son Jesus Christ?" This is the *true God* and eternal life, viz. that God, of whom his Son hath given us an understanding, and who is

the original source of that eternal life, of which all who truly know him will be partakers!

Now, if because the self-existent and independent God is, in this scripture article, styled the true God and eternal life, it *is* to be inferred that *Jesus Christ* the *Son of God* is *self-existent and independent*, I see not but the use of sound logic or correct reasoning must be entirely useless, unless its use should be to convert truth into falsehood, and falsehood into truth. Or if, admitting, (though it is not admitted,) that Jesus Christ is styled in the article under consideration, the true God and eternal life, it is to be inferred that he is the self-existent and independent God, even that *very God who is the Father*, I see not, even in this case, but an inference may be drawn without a premiss to justify it, and that the art of reasoning must be an art of fallacy and deception.

Article 3.—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment;" Matthew xxv. 26.

"Definite meaning. The future punishment of men who die in their sins, will be absolutely endless." The definite meaning of this article is, in my view, somewhat *in*definite.

Had the gentleman simply said that the characters referred to by the evangelist are, or will be doomed to endless punishment, I should find no difficulty in understanding what he meant. I should readily admit his meaning to be sufficiently definite, nor should I oppose the truth which it conveys.

I have now reviewed the "short creed" of my opponent, expressed "wholly in scriptural language," with his "definite meaning" affixed to it; or rather, I have examined his definite meaning of that creed, which I humbly conceive is found wanting"—*greatly* wanting, in perspicuity, correctness, and truth. It indeed obscures divine truth, and is fitted to make people, who have not the independence or disposition to examine and judge for themselves, to "err in vision, to stumble in judgment," and to keep them in ignorance, "not knowing the scriptures." And yet this same *definite* meaning of scripture must be subscribed or assented to as the "sense of the Holy Ghost," or you must be excluded from christian privileges and christian intercourse with the "upright and faithful," as a heretic; and your religious sentiments, however *scripturally* correct, will be placed on the same footing with those of *Voltaire* and *Paine!* But in full view of all this formidable evil, the "orthodox clergyman" does not hesitate to say that he "would be as loath to subscribe the whole of this creed, if he must profess to understand it *in the sense given*, as if it had been drawn up in language of human device." Indeed he has not discernment enough to discover the difference between subscribing a creed of human device, *placed under a scriptural*

creed, and another creed of human device, which has no connexion with this *circumstance*.

The gentleman has now my "answer." But if this answer is not sufficiently explicit, I will add, that I could not, consistently with my views of bible truth, and my obligation to its authority, subscribe his scriptural creed, *according to his definite meaning of it*. This answer has, I hope, in the estimation of Mr. A. "*in a great measure developed the secret of this business.*" And it is devoutly to be hoped that the *secret* will ere long be *wholly disclosed*. I am certainly disposed, and think it my duty to do whatever I consistently can, to make the disclosure; nor, with my *opponent's assistance*, do I despair of success.

And now, my dear sir, let me ask, what is "the real necessity and vast utility of creeds expressed in other language than that of scripture?" We have a creed before us, which professes definitely to explain the meaning of scripture, or the sense of the Holy Ghost. But can you conceive of any benefit or good, which would be likely to result from assenting to it, unless it should be such benefit or *good*, as results from *evil?* Can it be right or useful to assent to a creed, which is partly *very obscure*, partly *differing from the sense of scripture*, and partly, in all *reasonable probability*, a *gross perversion* of scripture? Will the cause of truth and the extension of scriptural knowledge, be likely to be promoted by this expedient? Will christians, by assenting to this creed, be likely to be cemented together by that charity, which the *gospel inculcates?* Will assenting to error for truth, convert that *error* into *truth?* Can such an assent be acceptable and pleasing to the great head of the church? Is it justifiable? is it *safe?* I speak as unto a wise man, judge thou.

Whether this definite creed is less exceptionable than many others now in use, as tests of orthodoxy and terms of christian communion, I shall not undertake *definitely* to decide. But that these creeds are highly exceptionable, and ought not to be assented to, I am fully persuaded. If not in the exact words, yet in substance, most orthodox creeds, so called, contain the following articles.

1. There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory."

2. Christ, the son of God, became man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, and yet without sin."

These articles are considered by many "masters in Israel" as among the great and *first* fundamental doctrines of the gos-

pel, and that no man can be a christian without believing in, and assenting to them; nor will they admit any into the pale of their churches, who refuse to assent to them. But what is the assent, I desire to know, which is given to these articles, by those who *say they believe them?* Is not the assent as different, as the ages and complexions of the persons who give it? and is it not often, if not generally, a *mere blind assent?* Let the question be proposed to these orthodox christians, "What do you mean by *three persons* in *one God?*" the most of them will probably answer, that they do not understand the subject—that they have no distinct ideas about it—and that it is a *mystery*, which can *neither be explained or understood.* Others will probably answer, that by three persons in one God they understand *three distinct beings*, so united together by a mysterious and inexplicable union as to constitute *one God.* Others again will probably answer, that by three persons in one God, they understand *three offices* belonging to *one God*, or three *agents*, or *agencies*, or *perfections*, or *modes of existence*, or three *somethings*, in *one God.* Should the question be asked, "Can it reasonably be supposed, that *three distinct beings* can exist the same in substance, and be *equal to each other* in power and glory, or in every perfection, and yet that these *three beings* coustitute but *one being*, or but *one God?* The answer will probably be, the subject is *unintelligible* and does not *admit of explanation.* Let the question be asked—is *each* of the three *offices* in the one God *equal* to the *other*, or to *both the others?* is *each* of these offices, *self existent*, *independent*, *possessed of infinite power*, *knowledge*, *wisdom*, &c. ? Or does *each mode*, or *agency*, or *perfection*, in the divine existence, possess all *these perfections?* and is *each* equal to the *other*, or *both the others?* or does *each* constitute or comprehend the *whole* of Deity, or the divine existence? will not the same answer be given as above?—these things are "unintelligible and do not admit of explanation;" *we do not understand the doctrine of the Trinity.*

Let these same christians be asked—whether they believe that "Christ the Son of God," or the *second person* in the Trinity, was, according to the second article, "*conceived* by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and *born of her!*" If the answer be yes; let it be further asked, whether, on supposition that the son of God be the "same in *substance*" with the Father, and be *equal* to Him in "power and glory," he *could* have been *conceived* by the power of the Holy Ghost, and *born of a virgin!* How is this question to be answered? To say that *God the Father* was *thus conceived* and *thus born* must appear, I should think, highly incongruous and repulsive to every considerate and reflecting mind.—

But must it not appear equally so, to every such mind, to represent Christ the Son of God as conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary, on the supposition that he is *equal* in power and glory *with the Father*, *or that he is the same being*, *or same God with the Father !*

How can a person, who is *self sufficient*, *independent* and *eternal* be *conceived*, by *another person*, or by the *power* of another person !—Let it further be asked, whether it is not very improper to view this same Son of God, who is supposed to be equal to his Father in power and glory, as a *proper man ?* On supposition that he took to himself a " true body and a reasonable soul, it may be easy to conceive that *this body and soul* constituted a *proper man ;* but to infer from this, that the *Son of God*, or that the *self-existent and independent Jehovah became a man*, is evidently too repugnant both to reason and scripture, I should think, ever to be admitted. Besides, should the advocates for this article be called upon to exhibit their belief, that Christ the Son of God became man by taking to himself, as well a *reasonable soul*, as a true body, what could they produce for this, but mere conjecture, or human authority !

But these questions will probably be evaded by the plea, which is so often made—that the subjects to which they refer are too *mysterious* to be explained or understood. And it is not to be doubted *they are so*, as they are stated in the above articles. But how then, I would ask, can any man consistently with *reason* assent to them as Bible truths ? How can a man solemnly declare, withan enlightened *conscience*, that he verily and religiously *believes* certain doctrines or propositions to *be true*, when he *does not understand* the import of those doctrines, or the terms of those propositions ? I am constrained to say, though very reluctantly, that I do not see how this declaration can be made with the *approbation of the understanding*, or *consistently with that moral integrity and truth*, which ought to govern the christian's conduct. Would you not censure and condemn a man as highly criminal, who, before a lawful magistrate, should unreservedly swear to the truth of a certain written instrument, when at the same time he *knew not* the import or meaning of a *very important* and the *most essential part* of that instrument ? But is it less censurable in a man to declare in the most solemn manner, appealing to God to witness his sincerity, that he *believes* in the truth of an article, or articles of faith, when he *neither knows* nor *pretends to know* their import or meaning ! There is *that* in this transnction, which to me appears not only *unjustifiable* but *exceedingly repulsive.*

But suppose that these articles should be as *untrue* as they are *inexplicable*, would not assent to them in this case, be still

more unjustifiable, repulsive? This I presume you will admit. And is it not possible they *are* untrue? This you will not deny, unless you should stand forth the champion for the cause of human infallibility, which I think you will not do. But that these articles are *not true*, is not barely *possible*, but in the *highest degree probable*. Many of the greatest of men, and the best of christians have, in all ages of the christian era, believed them to be untrue; nor can any satisfactory evidence be produced that they were believed to be true by *any individual* in the the christian church, till the *fourth century*, when the church had become corrupt and enflamed by angry passions, and convulsed by unhallowed and violent controversy. Then, indeed, articles of faith analagous to these were *invented*, embraced, patronized and enforced as tests of orthodoxy and terms of christian communion. And *as* such tests, they have existed in the *church of Rome* for more than a thousand years. During this long lapse of time, these articles have been considered as *fundamental*, by the great body of *hereticks* in the christian church, of the Roman Catholic church is to be considered as heritical.

I mention these things, my dear Sir, not as an argument furnishing conclusive evidence that the articles under consideration are not true; but as an argument which is, at least, equally forcible *against* the truth of these articles, as the argument which is often urged by their advocates in *favor* of their truth. It is not unfrequently said that these articles are believed to be true by the great body of *orthodox chrsitains*. Hence it seems to be inferred as a thing not to be questioned, that the articles *are* and *must be true*. This kind of reasoning may have weight and be conclusive with the ignorant and the inconsiderate. But men of enlightened and reflecting minds will not fail to hold it in *proper estimation*. And who that possesses any discernment but must see, that if, besause orthodox christians believe in these articles, they must *be true*, they must also *be untrue*, if believed by an equal number of hereticks; and if believed by a much greater number of hereticks, they must, if possible, be much *more than untrue*!

But after all, the inspired scriptures are to be acknowledged as the only standard by which the truth or error of these articles is to be tested. If these scriptures teach us that there are "three persons in the Godhead," we are bound to believe the doctrine, however difficult it may be to understand it. But if they always speak of God, as one individual person or being, we are bound to believe this doctrine, and it would be wrong to believe otherwise. What then saith the scriptures on this subject? Do they not expressly and *invariably* speak of the self-existent God as *one person or being*, and *but one?* This, it

should seem cannot *reasonably* be questioned. Nor can it reasonably be denied that they *never* say that God is *three persons* or that there are *three persons in the Godhead.* And it is confidently believed that they never speak a language, which *implies this*, Is it not unsafe then, is it not unjustifiable—is it not *criminally adding* to the scriptures, to believe and say that they teach this mysterious and unintelligible doctrine."

If the scriptures teach us that "Christ, the Son of God," is the same being or God, with him who is his Father, or equal to him in power and glory, we are bound also to believe this doctrine, however above our reason, or however difficult to be understood. But if, on the contrary, the scriptures teach us, in the most unequivocal manner, that Jesus Christ is a person or being *distinct* from the one God, his Father; that he is the one mediator *between* this one God and men; that he is the *advocate with this one God* for men; that he is *begotten* of the Father, and *dependent* on the Father for his titles, his dignities, and for the power by which he performed his wonderful works; that his Father is *greater* than he, and that he is hereafter to *give up the kingdom committed to him*, to his Father, that God might be all in all. If the Bible gives us this represeniation of Jesus Christ, as it *certainly does;* and if it says nothing *contradictory* to this representation, and it is believed it *does not*, then to believe that he is either the same being with his Father, or that he is equal in power and glory to his Father, cannot be conformable to truth.

If the scriptures teach us that the Holy Spirit is a *person*, and a person equal to God in power and glory, we are, without hesitation, to admit the truth of *this* doctrine. But, if instead of this, they speak of the Holy Ghost or Spirit as a *thing*, and *not* as a *person*, unless in a figurative sense, then it must be a great error to believe that he *is* a person. But it is a fact which cannot reasonably be controverted, and which I think no one who has attended to the subject will deny, that *Holy Ghost*, or *Holy Spirit* is of the same import, as used by the inspired writers, with the *breath of God*, *power of God*, or the *emenation of his eneogetic fulness;* that *Spirit* of God is always an *impersonal* or neuter noun; that no expressions of mutual affection occur in the scriptures *between God and the Holy Spirit*, as between *God* and his *Son*, or between different persons, and that *no ascriptions of praise or doxologies are offered to the Holy Spirit.* These things, duly considered, exhibit very strong evidence that the Holy Ghost or Spirit is not a person, in any other, than an *improper or figurative sense.*

If it be true that Christ, the Son of God, became man by taking to himself not only a true body, but a *reasonable soul;*

and if the scriptures teach this doctrine, it is undoubtedly worthy of all acceptation. But if the scriptures teach us *only*, that a *body* was prepared for him, that he partook of *flesh* and *blood*, that he was *made flesh*, then it cannot be our duty, nor can it be justifiable to believe, that he took to himself a *reasonable soul*. Where the evidence is to be found that Jesus Christ took to himself a human soul, in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, or that he possesses such a soul, or that he became, or was *properly a man*, I know not. If evidence of this exists, it is to be found, I should presume, in such passages as speak of him as a *man*, and as the *Son of man*. But do these passages teach, that he was *really* a man like other men, sin only excepted? If so, how are we to account for it that *as man*, he should be represented as *God's fellow?* And that *as Son of man* he should be *Lord of the Sabbath* and *of angels;* have power to *forgive sins*, and have judgment committed to him *to judge the world!* What higher names, and dignities, and offices are ascribed to Christ in the Bible as *Son of God*, than are ascribed to him as *Son of man* or *man?* But are these things to be ascribed to a *mere man*, whose existence commenced but about eighteen centuries past? What evidence have we then that Christ *is* such a man? Or that such a man constitutes *any part of his character*, or that he possesses a *higher character* than is ascribed to him *as man?* If Christ as *man* is *God's fellow*, does he, or can he possess a higher character than this, considered as the *Son of God?* But that Christ, whether he be spoken of as Son of God, or as man, or as Son of man, existed *before Abraham and before the creation of the world;* that he was the agent *by*, or *through* whom the Supreme Father made the worlds, and that he is the *brightness* of the Father's glory, and the *express image* of his person, are truths which seem very clearly taught in the scriptures of truth. And in these same scriptures we are taught, and I should think with sufficient clearness, what we are to believe concerning the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Spirit*. And can we, my dear Sir, attentively read these scriptures, without finding clear and satisfactory evidence, that the Father is the *one only living and true God*, *self-existent and independent;* that the Son is a person or being *distinct from the Father*, *and dependent on the Father*, but possessing a character and dignity *unspeakably and inconceivably greater than that of a mere man*, *or even the highest archangel*, *&c.*; that the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is the *breath*, the *power*, and if I may so speak, *the fulness of God!* This seems to be the intelligible and plain account which the scriptures give of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and that this is the view which *orthodox christians* generally have of the subject, or *would have* of the subject, were they suitably to

examine the scriptures, scarcely admits of a doubt. And yet this intelligible, and plain, and scriptural statement of the subject must be obscured by words without knowledge, and by words, which it is probable in the highest degree, are very far from being the words of truth and soberness. And these words of human invention, must be formed into a creed. Nor is this all; the creed must be set up as a test or standard of orthodoxy, and must be assented to as a term indispensably necessary to christian communion! In order to be accounted "upright and faithful" christians, we are to assent, *not* to the form of sound words, which the scriptures furnish; *not* to "wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ," *but* to "words whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, and perverse disputings; words which I should think no man would venture to say are words of infallible truth, but which many believe, and not without reason, are words pregnant with bewildering, hurtful, and even *dangerous error*.

That christians who have the Bible in their hands, who are capable of reading and judging for themselves, and who profess attachment to this blessed book, as the standard of their faith; that christians of this description should, in so many instances, assent to this creed as the truth of God, when, at the same time, they acknowledge it to be an inexplicable, and of course, an unintelligible mystery, is a subject both of *surprise and regret*. That the sentiment should be advanced and advocated, that the belief of this unintelligible and erroneous creed is necessary to salvation, is a subject of *greater* surprise and regret; and that they, who are not allowed to have dominion over the faith of others, should oblige their fellow christians to assent to this creed, in order to their admission to the special ordinances and privileges of the gospel, is a subject about which I know not *how suitably to express myself.*

My dear sir, these things *ought not so to be;* and it is as ardently hoped, that they will not, for a great length of time, continue in this train. Indications of divine providence, that the inspired scriptures will, ere long, have free course, run and be glorified, are now to be seen. This is encouraging, as these indications will no sooner prove a happy reality, than human creeds and middle walls of partition will be no more; *Jews* and *Samaritans*, sacrificing their mutual enmities on the altar of the gospel of peace, will maintain with each other the most friendly and benevolent intercourse; the unhallowed bickerings and contentions between christians of different sects and denominations, will give place to mutual harmony and love; none will be of *Paul*, of *Apollos*, of *Cephas*, but all will be of *Christ;* wars, both civil and religious, will cease from the ends of the earth; the family of man will be united in one great and

friendly family, and nothing will hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain. Animating prospect! soon may it be converted into a joyful reality.

My opponent (p. 19) objests to "a creed drawn up wholly in texts of scripture," on the consideration that it "affords every one an opportunity to assent to it in the sense in which he understands the passages, of which it is composed." And this, it seems, is an evil too great and alarming to be tolerated! It must be provided against, and by no means suffered to exist! But how is the evil to be prevented? By requiring assent to the passages in a sense, in which the party assenting does *not* understand them! This it seems is the "grand expedient" to be used! But in *what sense* is the person assenting to understand them? In the *definite* sense affixed to them by Mr. A? But *how* is he to accord his assent to these passages, in a sense in which *he neither does nor can understand them*, or which is the same thing, in a sense in which *he neither does nor can assent to them?* Let it however be supposed that this seemingly insuperable difficulty may be removed; yet I desire to know in what sense this same *definite meaning* is to be assented to. If in the sense in which the person assenting understands it, I see not but "Arius, Socinius, Swedenborg, and even Jemima, would readily assent to it." But if this definite sense must be understood conformably to the sense of the definer, hard indeed must be the case of those who are required to assent to it, unless they are to be understood as assenting to, or acknowledging it, as a sense very *indefinite* and *erroneous!* No other assent I am persuaded could, consistently with truth, be given to the gentleman's definite meaning of scripture, if we may be allowed to judge from the specimen he has given.

A creed drawn up wholly in texts of scripture, the gentleman adds, same page, "opens wide the door of the church to the grossest hereticks, not to creep in, but to come in openly, under the name of orthodox good christians." This observation I will not say is so "obscure and crooked" that "it exceeds the ability of an archangel to make it luminous or straight," yet I am very willing to say that it exceeds my ability. How the grossest *hereticks*, by means of a scriptural creed, or by any other means, can come *openly* into the church, under the *name* or *guise* of *orthodox good christians*, is utterly beyond my comprehension. That such hereticks might some how or other *creep* into the church, is conceivable; and I can hardly conceive of a better expedient by which they might effect it, than a *definite meaning* of a scriptural creed, which is *grossly indefinite and heretical.* But let them be properly tested by a scriptural creed, "and this fine stratagem will be entirely frustrated." If, however, a scriptural creed cannot be available to the

exclusion of these same gross hereticks from the pale of the church, *let them come in.* But are we, my dear sir, to hold the sacred scriptures in so low and degrading estimation, as to admit that they "open wide the door of the church to the grossest hereticks!"

If others hold them in this estimation, I am *persuaded* better things of you, and will *hope* better things of them; yet I cannot but express deep regret, mingled with astonishment, that *any* man bearing the christian name, should seem to estimate these scriptures, as a bulwark against the inundation of heresy, not only at a much lower rate than *particular definite meanings* of them, but as *opening wide the flood gates to this pernicious inundation!*

In page 20, my opponent observes, "If no definite meaning is to be affixed to the language of your scripture creed, one for an English church might as well be drawn up in an Hottentot translation as any other."—But by whom is this *definite meaning* to be affixed? By those who are to assent to the creed? According to this gentleman's views, such liberty or indulgence is perfectly inadmissible; for if "every one has an opportunity to assent to it in the sense in which he understands the passages of which it is composed, it opens wide the door of the church to the greatest hereticks." But this same definite meaning must be affixed to the scriptural creed, it should seem, by some one who "sits in Moses' seat," whether he had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel or not, or whether he is acquainted or unacquainted with the original of the scriptures, or whether he is competent to the writing of his own language with grammatical precision and logical correctness. Since then this definite meaning must be affixed to the "scripture creed," by some one who has, or who *claims a right to do it*, upon whom, but upon Mr. A. will this business be likely to devolve? for who has a *better right* than this gentleman to affix definite meanings to scripture passages, and who, in his own estimation, is *better qualified* for this important business? It is however much to be regretted that a scriptural creed without this gentleman's meaning affixed to it, would be no better than a creed "drawn up in an Hottentot translation!" But is it indeed *true* that the scriptures *are no more intelligible* to christians, generally, *than the language of Hottentots!* Will christians in this enlightened age suffer the *scriptures* thus to be *vilified*, and their *own understandings* to be treated with *contempt!* Will they tamely submit to these things lest they should be branded with the epithet of *hereticks* and *put out of the synagogue!* If such be the ascendency of orthodox arrogance and superstition over rhe understandings, the consciences and liberty of christians of a particular description, "wo worth

the day !" Their situation is to be commiserated ; and the yoke, if possible, to be broken from their necks, and their christian liberties to be asserted."

In the same page my opponent further observes, that " if mere words without ideas is the thing to be believed, the beads of the Catholic are as good a creed as any other."—This is undoubtedly true, and a truth which it is presumed, no man does, or even did dispute. For what purpose, then, did the gentleman make the remark ? Was it for the purpose of making the impression on the mind of his reader, that *words*, and particularly the *words* of *scriptures are without meaning*, until he affixes to them a *definite meaning ?* Or was it meant as an insinuation that his opponents affix *no meaning* to scriptural words, or that in assenting to those words nothing is intended but an assent to " mere words without ideas."—If he intended *neither* of these things, it is difficult to conceive what could have been his intention ; but if he intended *either*, he has not failed to exhibit himself in a *point of light*, in which no one, who is not blind, can fail *pretty clearly to see him.*

In the same page Mr. A. introduces the opposers of creeds [human creeds] as saying that their object is most noble and benevolent" —that " instead of anathematizing each other," they " wish to unite discordant tongues in hosannas to the one God and Saviour in the same temple."—And this, he observes, is " an object devoutly to be wished." " But," he adds, " do you imagine it is to be effected by the wisdom of this world ?"—That discordant tongues might be happily united, as well in hosannas to the *Saviour* as to the *one God*," is, as the gentleman observes, an object devoutly to be wished ; but that this desirable event is *not likely* to take place through the instrumentality of *worldly wisdom* cannot reasonably be questioned. Is it not the part of *true wisdom*, then, to abandon human creeds or articles of faith, which are the device or invention of worldly wisdom, for effectuating this wished for event, and to substitute the Bible in their room, as the *only standard* of christian faith and union ? Could we but persuade discordant tongues to use the pure words of this inspired book, and discordant hearts to embrace its pure doctrines, the object so much desired would be happily accomplished. Nor can any expedient be devised, it is presumed, so likely as this, to effect the important object.

" How," enquires my opponent, in the same page, " can he that deems the Saviour a mere creature, and he that adores him as God over all, blessed for ever, worship in the same assembly ! Suppose he that leads in the solemnities addresses the Lord Jesus as the Jehovah of Hosts, can the Socinian join in this idolatry "? If he who believes the Saviour, to be God over all, and he who believes him to be a mere creature, should find it *difficult* harmoniously to " worship in the same assembly ;" yet perhaps this difficulty is not an *insuperable one*. I humbly conceive that it is not. Indeed there *are* many christian societies where religious worship is maintained in the same assembly, although by many of the worshippers the Saviour is con-

sidered both as a *mere creature*, and as *God over all* in the highest and most absolute sense. Is not this the case in all *real Trinitarian assemblies?* If I understand them, all real Trinitarians believe that Jesus Christ the Saviour is a mere man like other men, sin only excepted, and that he never actually existed till the reign of the Roman Emperor, Augustus Cæsar; and yet they profess to believe that he is God over all, even self-existent and independent. Now since these christians *do* worship in the same assembly, it requires no reasoning to show that they *can* do it. Nor do I see but "the Socinian can join in this idolatry." Why should he not? for, with the Trinitarian, he believes that "the Saviour is a mere creature," and, with the Trinitarian, he believes there is but one supreme and independent God. He believes also, with the Trinitarian, that this one God is united, and so intimately with the man Christ Jesus, as to enable him to perform miracles and to do all his wonderful works. Such is the unity of sentiment between Trinitarian and Socinian christians, respecting the one God, and the one Lord Jesus Christ, that they might well harmonize, I should think, in worshipping in the same assembly. And this union between them in sentiment would, I am persuaded be *very apparent*, were "the doting about questions and the strife of words" but once abandoned, and their *seemingly* discordant opinions, *fairly analysed*. Their difference in opinion, it is confidently believed, relates much more to *words* than to *things*. I would ask my opponent then, "how can they *not* worship in the same assembly?" If "he who leads in the solemnities addresses the Lord Jesus as the Jehovah of Hosts," or as the self-existent God, neither will the Socinian nor the Trinitarian consider him as addressing a *mere creature;* but as addressing the one *supreme God*, besides whom there is none other. The Socinian can reasonably infer nothing more in reality from the address than this, that the speaker believes the *one God* has made himself known, besides other titles, by the title, *Lord Jesus*. And the Trinitarian worshipper would, I should think, be likely to make the same inference. However then the Socinian should believe the speaker to be under a mistake, as to the *application* of this title to the one God, yet his candor it may be presumed, would not allow him to consider his mistake as a fundamental error, or an error furnishing sufficient ground for their separation, and worshipping in different assemblies. But whether either the Socinian or the Trinitarian party will view the subject in this light, I know not. Should they, however, view the subject differently, I see not, I confess, any sufficient reason for it. Nor, should the event happen, and at no very distant period, that they will better understand each other, and interchangeably give and receive the *right hand of fellowship*, I shall not be greatly disappointed. Yet may not the hope be indulged that, abandoning the belief that Jesus Christ is either mere man, or the self-existent and independent God, they will mutually agree to meet their opponents on *harmonious*, and as they believe, *scriptural ground?* Meeting on this ground, we shall all believe that Jesus Christ *was* before Abraham—that he was *begotten* of the Father—in the *beginning* with God—that God *by* or *through him* made the worlds—that he is the *brightness of the Father's glory* and the *express image of his person*—that he is *head over all things* to the church, and that he is *God over all*, in

that the supreme God, even *his* God *put all things under him*, (himself being excepted)—in that his Father *hath committed all judgment to him*, and *given all things into his hands*, even *all power in heaven and earth*—in that God hath *given him a name which is above every name* that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come—and that he is *blessed forever*, or the object of everlasting blessing; for "worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and *blessing*; and blessing and honor shall be" not only "unto him that sitteth upon the throne" but "unto the Lamb forever and ever."

In page 21, the gentleman has the courtesy to crave "pardon" if he should "ask, whether this zeal against creeds, may not arise from the dread of ecclesiastical censure, the loss of popularity, and of the loves and fishes?"—This insinuation is so very extraordinary, that I can hardly conceive that it would come from any one whose head is not a "babel." That the "dread of ecclesiastical censure should induce any one to oppose human creeds, and in a public manner too, whether with "zeal" or moderation, is to me as unaccountable as it is wonderful. Are not human creeds almost as generally the object of attachment and veneration among us, and around us, as was the goddess *Diana* to the *Ephesians?* And do not great numbers of the most respectable and pious ministers and churches hold them in high estimation? Is it not true also that these ministers and churches verily believe they ought, in some way or other, to censure those of their brethren, who openly oppose their creeds? Do they not give evidence of this, not by *words only*, but by *actions*, and by such words and actions too, as cannot be very pleasant to the ears or grateful to the sensibilities of those, against whom they are levelled? And yet a *dread* of *this censure* excites a spirit of zeal n some, to *incur* it, and with their eyes open, by publickly, and without disguise, *opposing human creeds or articles of faith!* Thus did *Luther*, *Calvin*, and many others, oppose the dogmas of the church of Rome, *lest they should incur the displeasure of its pontiff, and expose themselves to the thunder of the Vatican!* But that any one whose *idol* is "popularity," and who has a *keen appetite* for the "loves and fishes" should, with his eyes open, pursue a course, *destructive* of popular applause, *ruinous* to the gratification of his appitite, and *effectually conducive* to "ecclesiastical censure," is so unnatural and so strange, that no one, I should suppose, would ever think of this course, had it not been suggested by a man of extraordinary policy. Nor should I suppose that any man of common discernment and policy, would pursue a course like this, to *regain* to his ear the "dulcet sounds of applause from the flattering multitude," or to *recover* the lost loves and fishes for the gratification of his ravenous appetite. But I *can* suppose that men are to be found. even in this degenerate age, who, fearless of censure, regardless of the sweet incense of public admiration, and the gratification of a selfish appetite, dare appear as advocates for christian liberty, in opposition to ecclesiastical influence, and usurpation. But whether men of this description in daring to engage in this *formidable*, and *hazardous enterprise* are worthy of "ecclesiastical censure," and to be exposed as infidels to popular prejudice and odium, I shall not peremptorily decide. If not *before*, yet at the *great assize*, an im-

partial and irreversible decision on the subject will be made. Nor shall I undertake *definitely* to decide whether these men are "too much afraid of the cross," or whether, "like primitive christians they are thankful that they are accounted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake." I am willing, however, that all who take suitable knowledge of them should decide, whether "they have been with Jesus," and "know the fellowship of his sufferings." Nor am I unwilling that all men, so soon as they shall be in a *suitable situation for it*, should judge between *them* and their *opponents*, and between the *conduct* and *motives* of each party. But whatever may be the satisfaction or regret of either party, should just judgment be passed upon them hereafter by the public voice, it is probable that as much justice will be done on the *one side*, as could be *reasonably claimed*, and perhaps *much more* on *the other*, than is at present *expected*, or will *ever be desired*.

In the page last referred to, Mr. A. observes, and apparently with some chagrin, that "there is one word in which these candid opposers of human creeds seem much to delight, no doubt because they imagine it gives an edge to their wit, and poignancy to their satire."—And this same word, after keeping the mind of his reader for a considerable time on the "tiptoe" of expectation, he insinuates is "Shibboleth."—Whether the opposers of human creeds delight in this word, or whether they use so *crooked* a word to *sharpen* the edge of their wit, or to give a sting to their satire; or whether they are themselves *given* to wit and satire, I pretend not to say. I should think, however, that this gentleman, must take no little "delight" in this "one word" as it occurs in his letter no less than *five times*, in the narrow compass of *six lines*. Whether by this successive repitition of the word he meant to "edge" his own "wit," and to give "poignancy" to his own "satire," *he has not told us*. I see not therefore but we must be content to remain in the dark with relation to the subject.

My opponent has, however, suggested one very important idea by his use of this same word *Shibboleth*. "But if" he observes, "a belief of the truth as a term of communion, is to be dubbed as a contemptuous Shibboleth, they (the opposers of human creeds) may as well go further, and say, the Apostles had their Shibboleth, and the Son of God had his Shibboleth."—Here I readily concur with the gentleman in admitting, that if a belief of the *truth*, as a term of communion, is to be considered as a Shibboleth, that the apostles, and the Son of God *had their Shibboleths*. And in these Shibboleths the opposers of human creeds "*seem* much to delight," nor does Mr. A. know for a certainty that this is not *really* the case. But if *he* would make use of no other Shibboleths than these, it is presumed his opponents would give him no further trouble, nor would he find any occasion to put himself to the trouble of *writing them down*.

In the same and next page, my opponent makes the following vehement and *electrical* apostrophe. "Christians! I feel as if you could be in no danger of mistake, should you exclaim with all possible emphasis—till the gates of hell prevail, a belief of the essential doctrines of the gospel will be required by the church of Christ, as a term of communion."—If the gentleman *feels* as if the essentia

doctrines of the gospel are, and will be safe in the hands of the church, and that they will prove an effectnal bar to the admission of hereticks into its bosom ; I see not but he may dismiss all his fears arising from the opposition which is made to the "pure, holy, evangelical truths" contained in human creeds. Since a belief of these truths will be unquestionably required by the church as a term of communion, till the gates of hell prevail ; and since we are assured by the great head of the church, that these gates shall never prevail against it, the gentleman, it should seem, may expect with unshaken confidence that none but sound believers, "upright and faithful" christians will become visible members of Christ's mystical body—that no "foolish virgins" will be found among the wise, and that no "bad fishes" will be found among "the good !" But however this may be, it is devoutly to be *hoped* that "a belief of the *essential doctrines* of the gospel will be required by the church of Christ as a term of communion ;" and not merely a belief of *these*, but of *all* the doctrines of the gospel, whether the belief of them be considered as essential to salvation or not. I know of no good reason, I confess, why a belief in *all* the doctrines of the gospel should not be required as a term of communion, as well as a belief in a part of them. To require a belief in *some* of the doctriues of the gospel *only* as a term of communion, seems hardly consistent with that respectful treatment, to which this blessed and holy book is justly entitled. It has indeed too much the appearance of "taking away from the words of the book of this prophecy." And the gentleman will not be offended, I hope, if I solemnly and with a spirit of concern ask—Whether if we *thus* take away from the gospel, there may not be just ground for fear, that "God will take away our part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book ?" In like manner I would further ask—whether, in requiring belief in what we deem the *essential* doctrines of the gospel, as a term of communion, we exhibit these doctrines, *not as they are found in the gospel, but as they are found in human creeds or articles of faith*, we shall not be justly chargeable with treating that inspired book with still greater disrespect, and expose ourselves, in a still higher degree, to an exclusion from the book of life ?—These are questions of very serious import. They are in the highest degree interesting. And most devoutly do I hope that they will not be treated with *indifference and neglect*. "Christians ! I feel as if you could be in no danger of mistake," if, abandoning 'for doctrines the commandments of men'—if, shaking off the yoke of human imposition, you should manfully assert the "liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free." I feel as if you would act the consistent and christian part, if you "should exclaim with all possible emphasis," we revere and embrace the gospel as the complete and only standard of our faith ; nor will we give countenance to ill treatment of any of its doctrines ; but insist, that "a belief" not only of its "*essential* doctrines," but of *all* its doctrines, shall be "required as a term of communion." Never will we consent that *any* of the doctrines of this holy book shall be set aside or treated as things of little or no importance, or things which may be *dispensed with in our articles of faith*. These articles are neither *more* nor *less* than the Bi-

ble furnishes. To these articles we assent, and not to their supposed "definite meanings." To these articles we expect and *require* assent of all, who would unite with us in christian fellowship; nor will *we suffer one of them to be expunged from our creed.* If, christian brethren, ye thus "fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, ye do well." "But if ye have" undue "respect to persons," and submit your faith, rather to their devices than to "wholsome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness," ye sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors"

My opponent, page 22, objects, and, apparently, with some degree of warmth, to my having appeared in my "seasonable thoughst" under the signature of *orthodox clergyman.* This, he observes is "unfair, seductive!" as the word "*orthodox* never was appropriated to any who denied the real divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ." If, as the gentleman says, I have acted an *unfair* and *seductive* part in assuming this epithet, I deserve his reprehension and ought to thank him for it. I do not, however, think myself very criminal for this conduct. Believing, as I do, that my religious sentiments are generally of the orthodox stamp, according to the common use and acceptation of the phrase, I did think that I had a fair and legitimate right to apply the word *orthodox* to myself. But as this application of the word is offensive to Mr. A. and as I have no superstitious reverence for, or attachment to it, the gentleman has my free and full consent to think snd speak of me as the *oudox* clergyman, as it is very possible that as much *scriptural truth* is to be found in *oudoxy* as *orthodoxy.* Be this however, as it may, yet I think that I have no inconsiderable claim to the epithet orthodox, if that claim is to be founded on a belief in "the real divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ." But whether I believe or deny the real divinity of Christ, or whether, with relation to this subject, I advocate the doctrine of *omoousianism*, or *omoiousianism*, of this I am persuaded, that I have in *reality* a much more exalted view of the character of Jesus Chrirt, than my *real* Trinitarian brethren. I think, therefore, I ought not to be charged with having acted an unfair and seductive part, in assuming the epithet *orthodox.*

The gentleman further observes in the same page in reference to my seasonable thoughts, that he "really expected to find something new, something that should have had the appearance at least of a mediator, between contending parties. But I find nothing but what is perfectly one sided, a bare repetition of the stale thread bare arguments of the heteredox."—In reply to this I have to observe, that it was *not my design* to exhibit any *new doctrine;* but the good *old doctrine* which was taught by Jesus Christ and his apostles. This doctrine, I trust, I did exhibit. But as my opponent seems to have thought otherwise, he would have conferred upon me a very great obligation, had he but only *attempted*, by a *single argument* to convince me of my supposed error. So much as this, I should think, he might have done "in charity." But as I do not perceive that in *this way* he has made the smallest effort, I would gladly indulge the hope that he will, in due time, prefer this old and well founded doctrine, to any of more modern date, whose foundation is the yielding sand.

I have further to observe, that if I did not exhibit any "appearance of a *mediator* between contending parties," I am sadly disappointed. It was my design, to pursue a *middle course* between those who believe that Jesus Christ is a *mere man*, and those who profess to believe that he is the *self existent and independent God*.—That neither of these characters belongs to Jesus Christ, but an intermediate character between them I attempted to prove by scriptural testimony, in my seasonable thoughts. In doing this, I thought I acted somewhat like a *mediator* between opposite and contending parties. But what will be the effect of this mediation, future time must declare. That it would be a good and desirable one, I *did* hope—I *still* hope so; nor, as I trust, without *sufficient reason*.

But the gentleman, it seems, found my "arguments stale and thread bare," that is *old* and *firm*. Whatever is *stale*, is *old* or *ancient*. And that my arguments have great antiquity in their favor cannot *reasonably* be questioned. It is acknowledged, and even by Trinitarians, who are *acquainted with the subject*, that the most *ancient* christian writers in general, "speak of Christ as a *distinct* person" from the Father; that before the Council of Nice, which was near the beginning of the fourth century, "they generally spoke of the Son as having had a glorious nature, pre-existent to his incarnation, and as *derived from the Father*." Nor can any satisfactory evidence be found in any of their writings, I am persuaded, in support of Christ's supreme and independent divinity. Thus it appears that my arguments are stale; that is, they were used in the *early ages of christianity*, before the church had become corrupted, as it afterwards was.

My arguments are also *thread bare*—that is, they are of a *firm and strong texture*, *and have worn well*. A garment which becomes thread bare must have been made of good materials, and have been well fabricated. But a garment of the opposite description is worn out, or becomes tattered, before the threads exhibit a bare appearance. Now these same arguments, notwithstanding they may be figuratively thread bare, are nevertheless firm and strong. Although by frequent and rough handling, their opponents may have worn off the nap, yet they have not been torn or materially injured by them. They still remain firm and entire, and so far as I can see are likely to become *more substantial*, *the more they are worn*.

I am not going to apply it" observes my opponent, in the same page, "but it (my assuming the epithet *orthodox*) certainly reminds me of a passage in Rev. 13, 11. "He had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon."

As it may be of no disservice to the gentleman, I will take the liberty just to remind him, that the author of the Apocalypse had, in the above cited chapter, a vision of *two beasts*. But whether of the twain is the *most beastly* the reader will decide.

A brief review will now be made of Mr. A's

CONCLUSION.

Here the gentleman "takes a candid, compendious and correct view of the migthy offence that provokes so much opposition and invective against human creeds." "It is," he observes, "simply this. A number of pious godly christians, voluntarily form themselves into

a church, agreeably to what they conceive to be the will of Christ. After much study and prayer for divine illumination, they have a deep conviction, that among the essential doctrines of the gospel, the following are included."

The real and proper Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The entire depravity of the human heart. Regeneration by special divine influence. Justification through the blood of atonement. The perseverance of Saints. There is no holiness but what consists in disinterested benevolence, and no true faith but what is the property of the heart, and is productive of good works." These articles "they condense into a creed, and state them on paper with all possible correctness in other words than those of scripture."—In the view of this statement I have to observe, that if opposers of human creeds are *mightily offended* with, and *pour invective* or abuse upon "pious godly christians" for adopting this expedient "to preserve the faith uncorrupted," they are *highly blameable*, and their conduct deserves *severe reprehension* But I would hope, and cannot but believe "better things" of them. If, however, they are really guilty of this unchristian conduct, let them be exposed; and let the censure and reproach, which they have incurred, fall upon them.

If the gentleman means to insinuate that the "pious and godly christians" of whom he speaks are *all* the subjects of true piety and godliness, and that *none but such christians*, possess the temper of the gospel, I cannot but strongly suspect that he both "abounds and suffers need" in relation to that charity which "believeth all things and thinketh no evil." However this may seem a paradox, its design and import are not too obscure, I hope, to be understood.

If these same, and *seemingly exclusive christians*, "condensed into a creed" for *themselves* only, what in their own estimation are "the essential doctrines of the gospel," they would not be chargeable with exercising dominion over the faith of *others*, or with barring the door of the church against those, who have both the *desire and right to enter in.* But when it is considered that *none* are suffered to enter in, but by their permission, and through the door which their creed opens, their conduct I must believe is very unjustifiable, and especially, if, on examination, this door should be found a *postern* door and much too narrow for the admission of *Strict Truth*, *Good Conscience* and *Correct Knowledge.*

Whether the door, which their creed opens for admission to fellowship, be thus narrow, may appear by a brief examination of the subject.

The first article of this creed requires a belief in "the proper Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ."—But what is to be understoood by this article? That the person who about eighteen hundred years ago was born of a woman, and after being among men a little more than thirty years and then died upon the cross, *was Proper Deity!* Or are we to understand by it that the one God, even the God and Father of Jesus Christ, is *nimself*, "the *Lord Jesus Christ!*" Or that there are *two proper Deities*, the *Father* and the *Son!* If the article is to be understood in *either* of these senses, I see not how any person can assent to it consistently with strict truth, a good conscience, and correct knowledge.

With respect to the other articles of the creed, I know not but if they were definitely explained, I should assent to them all as true. But as they seem to have no definite meaning, I must pray to be excused from giving to them my assent.

"*Entire depravity of the human heart.*" What is meant by *depravity?* Are the hearts of *all* mankind *entirely* depraved—the hearts of new born infants, and even the hearts of "pious godly christians!" "*Regeneration by special divine influence.*" As *regeneration* occurs but *twice* in the scriptures, and is used in *different senses*, the import of this article is too ambiguous to be satisfactorily decided.—"*Justification through the blood of atonement.*" By *whose blood* is justification effected? by the blood of a *mere man*, by the blood of a *super-angelic person*, or by the blood (as some seem to suppose!!) of the *self-existent, immutable and blessed God?*

"*The perseverance of saints.*" How *long* will they persevere!—"*There is no holiness but what consists in disinterested benevolence.*" What is *disinterested* benevolence? that benevolence in which the subject has *no interest*, or which is of *no advantage to him!* Or is it that benevolence in which his *highest interest or advantage consists?* "There is no true faith, but what is the property of the heart, and is productive of good works."—Is not the faith of devils a *true faith!* Is not their faith concerning God and his Son *true* or *correct* and in a high degree? Can their faith then be false? But is their faith seated in *their hearts!* And are not many wicked men the subjects of the same true or correct faith? This faith however does not, I should think, exist in their hearts. But admitting that all true faith is the property of the heart, yet is it not incorrect to say or believe that it is "*productive* of good works," this faith itself is *a good work*—it is "the keeping of the commandments of God," and "the fulfilling of the law."

This brief review of the creed, which the gentleman has produced, and which he speaks of as the result of "much study and prayer for divine illumination," makes it appear, ~~and~~ I must presume, in some measure, in *its proper light.* Who that examines it with any degree of critical attention but must be convinced, that it is extremely defective, confused, and not a little erroneous? And who that duly appreciates the luminous language and correct sentiments of scripture, could possibly persuade himself, or be persuaded to treat that language and those sentiments with *seeming* if not *real neglect*, by giving a practical preference to the confused, indefinite, and dark language, and erroneous sentiments which compose this creed! But on supposition its language were perspicuous and correct, who that duly reflects upon the subject, but must be convinced that it is *extremely defective*, if not *wholly deficient*, as to "the essential doctrines of the gospel!" It requires *no belief* in the existence, the perfections, and providence of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It requires *no belief* in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, as the Mediator between God and man, or as our Advocate and Intercessor with the Father! It requires *no belief* in the Holy Spirit as sanctifier and comforter! It requires *no belief* in man's accountability to God, or in the doctrine of the resurrection and the retributions of eternity!

Now, sir, what think you of this *orthodox creed*—a creed "stated on paper with all *possible correctness!*" Do you not think that it con-

sists of a goodly number of *negative articles!* and of such articles too, as the *scriptures* represent as *truly essential!* But what are its *positive articles?* some of them untrue, and others expressed in so confused a manner, as to render it extremely difficult, if not impossible to understand their import, or meaning. And yet this is the creed drawn up, and with all possible correctness by "pious godly christians, after much study and prayer for divine illumination!" By this creed the orthodoxy both of your head and of your heart is to be tested! To this creed, "as the best thing in the universe," you must give your assent, as an indispensable "term of ctmmunion" with these same pious godly christians! To this creed you must assent, or be treated as an infidel, a heathen man, and a publican! Nor will the most correct belief of the holy scriptures, nor a profession of this belief, nor the most exemplary discharge of the whole circle of social, moral, and religious duties, screen you from this unkind, unjustifiable, and, I am constrained to add, *unchristian treatment!* This is the creed which these orthodox christians use as an effectual expedient to prevent hereticks from "creeping into the fraternity, corrupting its faith, breaking its peace, and marring its beauty." And yet "they revere the Bible as the only true standard or test of orthodoxy" although "they well know that if their confession of faith was *conceived only in scripture language*," the evils above mentioned *could not be prevented!* And yet, "they are impressed with a deep abhorrence of persecutions in every shape!" Until my opponent shall give a *definite meaning* of these things, forlorn is my hope that I shall ever understand them. Nor is any other pen, I presume, than his own, capable of reconciling their *seeming* incongruities.

"As to modes of faith and worship," he observes "that it is their hearts desire and prayer to God, that every one may sit under his own vine and figtree, and none molest or make them afraid."—If the gentleman here expresses his own, and the views and feelings of his brethren who are "like-minded" with him, and "one toward another," I desire to know "what meaneth this *bleating* of the sheep in mine ears, and the *lowing* of the oxen which I hear!" When I hear these same orthodox christians praying and preaching against "the modes of faith and worship" of some of their brethren, and in a manner too, which indicates great zeal, and as some think, a deficiency in knowledge, as well as in the meek and humble temper of the gospel, the declaration of my opponent seems almost too paradoxical to admit of a fair solution. But if the declaration is to be understood according to its plain and obvious import, I see not but this gentleman and all his "pious godly christians," are willing that others whose "faith and worship" are really, or at least in their estimation, infidel and idolatrous, should *continue* in this faith and worship without molestation or fear! yes! I see not but it must be "their hearts desire and prayer to God," *that this may be the case!* And do they then really think, that it is no more "important to worship the true God, than a mere idol; that error and falsehood would as surely conduct to glory as truth, and "that truth and error are perfectly indifferent as to any influence they can have upon moral character!" But this is an "anti-christian liberality," from which *the opposers of human creeds would*, and *do*, I am persuaded, *revolt with horror.* But however this may

be. I most seriously declare, in relation to "my single self," that this antichristian liberality constitutes *no part of my creed*, nor can I find it in my heart to desire and pray that its advocates may continue in their antichristian faith and worship. It is my hearts desire and prayer to God I trust, that renouncing their errors, they may come to the knowledge of *Bible truth* as it is in Jesus, that they might be saved.

"The pious godly christians" whom Mr. A. has introduced to our notice "only claim" he observes "a right in common with all men to whom the gospel is sent to organize a church and to govern it agreeably to their views of truth and righteousness"&c. To this he adds "Now to rail against such an association of godly people, and to pour on them a torrent of reproach, as though they wished to usurp the authority of Christ &c. is a species of abuse highly incompatible, with the meek, the candid, the judicious and benevolent spirit of the humble followers of Christ. Well may such a church say to those who traduce them "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?'

That these same "godly people" have the "right," *in a civil view*, for which the gentleman pleads, is unquestionably true. And it is devoutly to be hoped that no court or tribunal on earth, either civil or ecclesiastic, will ever be able to extort it from them. But "whether it be right in the *sight of God* to hearken" unto the words or creeds of men in organizing a church &c more than unto the pure words of inspiration, is a question, which, I should think, not difficult to decide. No man, I conceive, has a *moral right* to "go *beyond the word of the Lord*" either with respect to faith or practice "to do less, or more."

"To rail against" this gentleman's "association of godly people" or against any other godly association, and to pour on them a torrent of reproach," is certainly a very bad thing, and I should think hardly compatible with the beneficent spirit of our holy religion." But is it not perfectly "compatible with the meek, the candid, the judicious, the benevolent spirit of the humble followers of Christ," to rail at, to load with calumny and reproach, creed-opposing hereticks, to insinuate or speak of them as endeavoring to transform the best thing in the universe into the worst," as charging to the account of "pure evangelical holy truth, boundless wickedness and misery" as chargeable with making gross misrepresentation,' as "wresting the scriptures to their own destruction, and well skilled in the soul destroying art" as being "insidions" as possessing the "wisdom which is not from above,' as speaking "the language of the wisdom of this world under a christian mask,' and saying "it is no matter what we think of God, or how we worship him," &c. as possessing more "infidelity than christianity," as setting aside a great part of the Bible as not clothed with divine authority, and as "rendering the Bible in a great measure unmeaning and useless," as concealing in their bosom a mystery of iniquity," as representing "truth and error perfectly indifferent, as to any influence thay can have upon moral characters," as the subjects of "antichristian liberalty," as vindicating a creed, although in the language of scripture, as no better than a creed "drawn up in a Hottentot translation," as forming a church which "is a mere babel, a perfect confusion of objects of adoration, sentiments and affections," as "unfair and seductive!"—Thus to rail

at hereticks, thus to pour a torrent of reproach upon *heretical churches*, seems perfectly compatible," with the meek, the candid, the judicious and benevolent spirit," of Mr. A. But whether sir, it is really compatible with the genuine spirit of the gospel, you will judge.

" Dear brother, let us not forget what a world it is in which we live. God has no friends among natural men, and many who profess the highest regard for him, have the least affection for his true character." That Mr. A. in these sentiments is correct, there is but too much reason to believe. And whether these " many" are to be found among those who practically say you must not come into our secrets, nor to our assembly must you be united, *lest God's holy name should be dishonored and profaned*, you sir, will judge. The gentleman proceeds.

" It is a property by which one species of false christianity has in all ages been distinguished, to arrogate to itself superior attainments in virtue, wisdom, candour and philosophy, and to throw the real friends of truth into the back ground, as too much the slaves of prejudice and ancient errors, to ascend with them into the pure regions of light." Here again, the gentleman is but too correct to be contradicted. The church of Rome and other churches patronizing abundance of " false christianity," have, it is well known, *arrogated* to themselves not only " superior attainments in virtue," &c. but *all true virtue*, and of course have considered the whole race of Adam, without the pale of their communion, as not only totally unqualified " to ascend with them to the pure regions of light," but as doomed to descend into the impure regions of everlasting darkness. And whether there is not *some resemblance* between these churches, and churches in our times, that arrogate to themselves, exclusively, " pure, holy evangelical truth," who consider themselves as the only " pious, godly christians" in the world, while all others are the subjects of " antichristian liberality."—Whether some resemblance is not to be traced between *these* and *those* churches, is a serious question.

My opponent thus concludes his letter, by observing, " Let us enquire for the good old paths and walk in them. Stars may fall from the spiritual heavens, the way of truth may be evil spoken of, but one grand consolation remains. The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." To these things I observe, happy would it be for christians, and christian churches of all denominations, were they to abandon all the devious paths which their own wisdom has marked out, and to turn their feet into the *good old paths*, which were trod by Jesus Christ and his apostles.

That " stars" which now blaze in their orbits like portentous and formidable comets, " will" indeed " fall from the spiritual heavens," where they now revolve with apparent safety, is highly probable; when it will be found that their light had been deceptive, and their influence baleful. Meanwhile, although the way of *Bible truth* may be civilly spoken of, let the consideration console us, that the foundation of God standeth sure, and that all those who truly build on *this*, and *not on the sandy foundation of human device*, will never be confounded.

I have now, my dear sir, completed my review of Mr. A's. letter to a friend, in which he says, that he has "shewn my seasonable thoughts on human creeds or articles of faith to be very unreasonable thoughts." Whether these thoughts are "seasonable," or "very unreasonable," you will judge for yourself. In writing and publishing them my object was not to provoke controversy, but to excite a spirit of serious and candid enquiry; to vindicate myself from imputations which I considered as unreasonable and unjust; to rectify mistaken views; to smooth the asperities of feeling, to which christians are as unhappily, as unreasonably subject; to correct a spirit of bigotry and censoriousness with respect to religious subjects, with which we are *all* but too justly chargeable in a less or greater degree; to remove unreasonable jealousies and criminations, which too much exist among christians of different sects and denominations; to recommend that rational candour and beneficient charity, which the gospel inculcates; to encourage a diligent and impartial study of the holy scriptures; to assert the superior claims which these scriptures have to our respect and guidance, both as to faith and practice, and to expose the inutility and evil effects of human creeds and articles of faith

How far my seasonable thoughts, or this vindication of them are calculated to effectuate these desirable purposes, future time and circumstances may decide.

Those thoughts, I *did view* as "candid," as well as "seasonable." And such is my *present view* of them; nor do I think that my opponent has been very successful in his attempt to shew them to be *very* unreasonable, or confused, or self contradictory, or crooked, or feeble, or infidel, or pernicious to the cause of "pure evangelical holy truth."

If his letter to a friend has excited any alarm in the minds of its readers, lest the cause of truth and the safety of the church are endangered by my seasonable thoughts, it gives to those thoughts, and to their author, an importance to which they make no claim, and to which they are not entitled. I am fully persuaded that neither they, nor their author, possess either ability or influence to subvert, or even to shake the foundation upon which either truth, or the church of Christ is built. It is not only my hope, but my confident belief, that they neither intend, nor are able to do such "boundless mischief." It is hoped, however, and it is possible that they *will* contribute somewhat towards the illustration and support of truth, and the edification and establishment of its real friends.

Whether my opponent has said or done any thing in his letter to prevent the desirable effects, which my seasonable thoughts were designed to produce, we have yet to learn. But should his effort to *prevent* those effects, prove a *powerful auxiliary in producing them I should certainly not be disappointed.*

If, in my vindication of these thoughts, I have discovered asperity, towards my opponent, or if I have done him, or the production of his pen injustice, I am ready to make all reasonable apology and concession. I am not conscious, however, of having been guilty of this conduct, which in others, I can easily see, and am ready to censure. But when I consider that controvesial writers are not apt to treat

each other with more respect, or more fairly, than they ought to do, and when I further consider that my opponent often expresses himself in a manner not perfectly adapted to my apprehension. I think it very possible that I have failed in doing, both him and his performance that justice to which they are entitled.

If any thing occurs in my seasonable thoughts, or in this vindication of them, which should be considered as hostile to, or declaring war with orthodoxy, I beg leave in justice to myself and the orthodox creed, to say that I have not *intentionally* uttered a hostile or warlike expression against that creed, as to its *general character*. I have aimed only at its *imperfections*, and at what I deem a *very injudicious and unjustifiable expedient for its support*. This creed, however, considered as a term of communion, highly as I otherwise respect it, will plead in vain for my patronage or even assent. Nor, in saying this, do I contradict what, for many years, have been my view and *uniform practice in relation to the subject*. For party creeds and party measures, as they are too generally conducted, whether they respect politicks or religion, I profess no attachment; and should my conduct accord with my present views and feelings, and resolutions, I shall be devoted to no party, nor advocate the cause of any, farther than to my apprehension, it is the *cause of truth and righteousness*. Nor shall I regard the *imputation*, I hope, of *versatility*, nor any other *imputation*, but in the manner it *ought to be regarded*.

If I have advanced any thing which may be construed as representing correctness in religious opinion, or sentiment, as unimportant; or articles of faith, as useless and inadmissible, I beg leave to say that no such thing was designed. So important do I consider correct speculation in regard to religious subjects, that I think too much cannot be said and done to divert the attention of christians from human creeds and formularies, which, at best, are but fallible and imperfect things; and fix their minds and enquiries on the "more sure word of prophecy." *Here is the rock of safety; all else is comparatively but treacherous sand.*—As to creeds or articles of faith—every one *will* and *must* have them; nor do I wish it were otherwise.—My only wish respecting the subject is, that all might have full liberty to form their *own creed*—that in doing this, they would make the Bible the only text book, and that all might rightly understand its sacred contents.

Should Mr. A. either from concern for myself or for the support of what he deems "pure, evangelical, holy truth' as contained in his own, or any other creed of human device, take the trouble to shew that this vindication of my reasonable thoughts is a *very unreasonable thing*. I beg leave to request the favor of him that he would do it by *argument*, and in a manner to be *understood*; to communicate *light*, and enforce *conviction*. If in an error respecting the subject, on which I have written, or on any other subject, most sincerely do I wish to be convinced of it; and most sincerely will I make my grateful acknowledgments to my opponent, or to any other man, whether orthodox or heretical, who will by sound reasoning, and in a *manly* and *christian manner*, convince, or endeavour to convince me of my supposed error. But I shall consider no one as entitled to these acknowledgments, who, by *declamation, passionate addresses, artful in-*

tinuations, or anathemas resulting from ignorance, or *hearsay*, shall attempt to render me, and my humble attempts to *defend the gospel*, and to *exalt the character of its glorious author*, *odious* and *abhorrent* in *the view of the public*. This is an expedient but *illy* adapted to convince me of my supposed heresy; and possibly it will be found in the end, as *illy* adapted to accomplish its *own design*.

I shall now close with an extract from an impressive charge given on the occasion of introducing several pious young men of promising talents to the work of the gospel ministry—"As you are to publish the *whole counsel* of God, faithfulness requires that you publish that *only*. Christ is the *sole* lawgiver in his church; and *sole* king in his kingdom. He has not given his ministers power to make laws, or impose articles of faith, or to appoint terms of communion, which he has not appointed. This would be to resign his kingdom and power into those hands, which are not fit to be entrusted with them. It is possible, men may, under the pretence of *ambassadors*, *representatives*, *vicegerents*, or any other *lordly name* assume to themselves a power, to determine *authoratively* in the affairs of *conscience* and *salvation;* and to enforce their decisions by *tests* and *penalties*. But this can be no other than a *bold usurpation* of the *authority* of Christ, and the *rights* of his subjects; a most grievous injury to *truth*, and the *liberties* of mankind.

Oh! the *tragedies* this *usurped authority* has acted in the world! It was *authority* that put the Lord of life to death, and opposed the propagation of his gospel. It was *authority*, that brought in *purgatory* and *transubstantiation*, with all the other absurdities of the church of *Rome*, and made them sacred from *ridicule*. It was *authority* that hid the purity of the gospel so long from our eyes, and delayed the reformation for ages, before it happened. *Authority* has often *consecrated* error; *nursed* ignorance, and *suppressed* truth. *Authority* has made *knaves*. *Authority* has made *fools*. But *mere authority* has seldom propagated *virtue* or *true religion*. The very *claim* of this *authority* is a reproach to *christianity*, and an insult upon *common sense*.

The *Author and Finisher of our faith* has given his ministers a commission to declare his will; to administer his ordinances; to receive those to communion, whom the *scripture-canon* receives; to exclude those whom *that* excludes; to reprove them who act amiss; to exhort to repentance, and to enforce their exhortations with the highest authority of Almighty God, the awful powers of another world, and all the engagements of *redeeming love*. Further degrees of church power I know not. The commission which Christ gave *even* to his *apostles* was, *to teach men to observe whatsoever* HE *had commanded them*, and nothing else. In vain do we call ourselves the *ministers of Christ*, unless we follow him alone, as our ultimate director. As far as we neglect to do this; as far as we follow our own imaginations, or the directions of any other *uninspired* men, without comparing them with the will of Christ; so far we cease to be *his ministers*, and become the ministers of our *own will*, or the will of *other* weak men like ourselves.

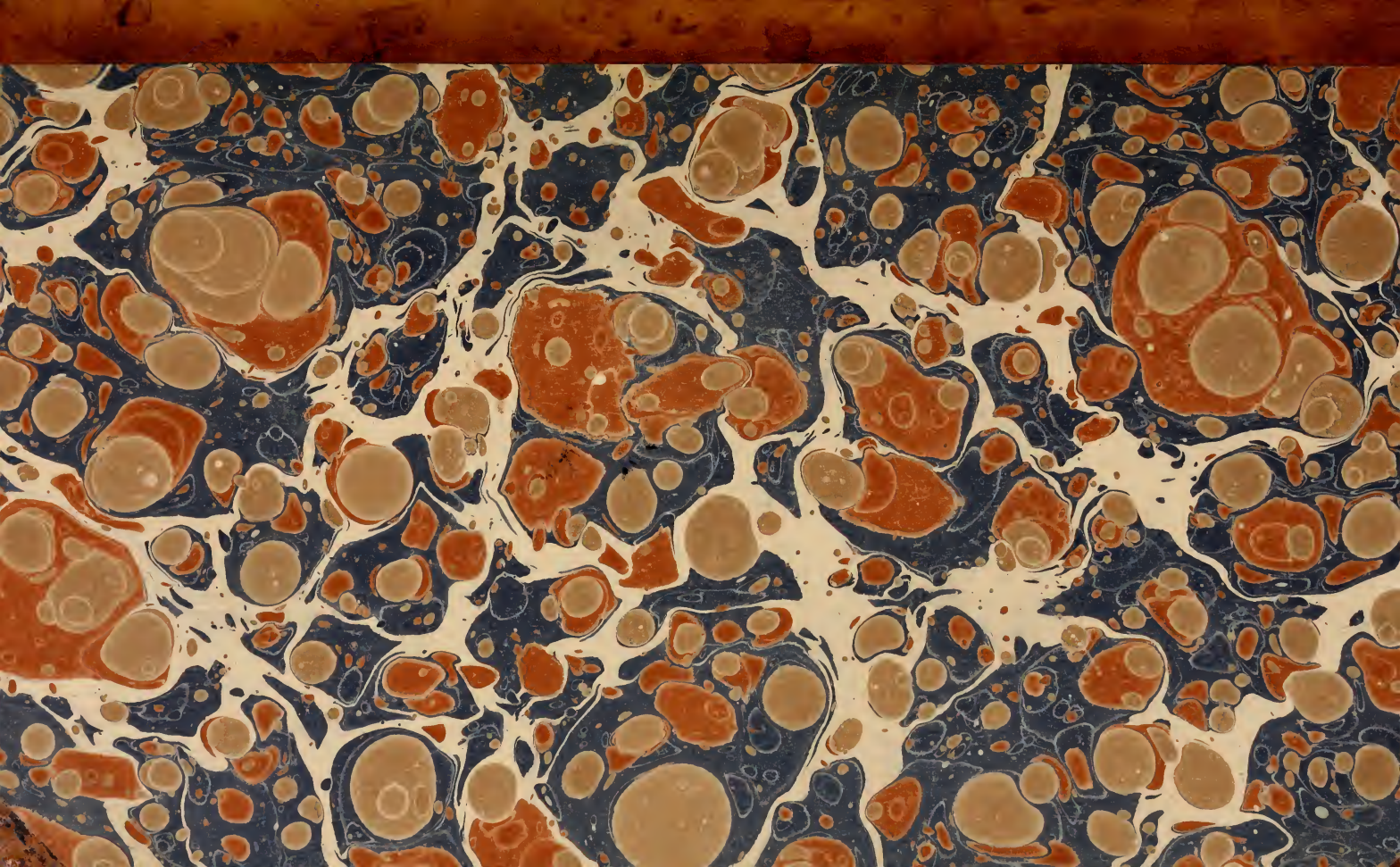
Nothing can be more inconsistent with *faithfulness*, than for a *servant*, whose commission is *limited*, to vary from the instructions he

has received, and to substitute *his own* commands instead of his *master's*. Nothing can be more inconsistent with *faithfulness* than for a minister of the gospel to teach and impose, as necessary parts of faith and terms of church communion, such matters of *opinion* or *practice*, as he knows Christ has not enjoined. This is *imposture* and *impiety*. It is deluding man, and trifling with God. Govern" then yourselves "by this *plain*, *honest* rule—TEACH NOTHING FOR CHRISTIANITY, BUT WHAT GOD, BY CHRIST, HAS MADE SO."

And now, my dear sir, that we may consider these things well—that others may do the same—that we may all receive from them the impression of true wisdom, and be duly influenced by them, is the heart's desire, and prayer to God of your sincere friend.

AN ORTHODOX CLERGYMAN.

ERRATA.

Page 4, line 17 fr. b. read Isaiah for it.—P. 5, l. 24 fr. t. read unreclaimed for unrestrained.—P 7, l 1st, read least for truth.—Same p. l. 2d fr. b. read test for text —P. 11, l. 7 fr. t. read---And that this is really the case, &c.—P. 13, l. 24 fr. t. read admits for admit.—P 16, l. 14 fr. b read test for text.—P. 19, l 11 fr. b. read symbolize for sympathize.---P. 23 l. 7 fr. t. read in relation, &c. for in violation, &c.—Same p. l. 14 fr. t. read rise for use.—P. 26, l. 11 fr. t. read quotation for question.—Same p l. 20 fr. t. read intend for extend.---P. 27, l 6 fr. b. read understand for understood.---P. 30, last line, after possibly. read to expose, &c.---P 31, l. 9 fr. t. read this for the.---Same p. l. 5 fr b. read admissible for admitted.---P. 32, l. 20 fr. t. read great for just.---P 34, l 23 fr. t read less for lees.---Same p. l. 15 fr. b read greatly for justly ---P. 36, l. 16 fr. t. read perspicuity for peaspicacity.---P. 38, l. 14 fr. t. read case for ease ---P 45, l 12 fr. t. read nor for or.---P. 48, l 10 fr. b. read energetic for eneogetic.-- P. 11, l. 20 fr. b. read propriety for prosperity.

N.B. Corrections by the press added to the above